WAYWARD HEARTS

DARBY RYAN

S. C. BROWN'S

Circulating LIBRARY,

49, EDEN STREET

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

TERMS:

2d. PER VOLUME PER WEEK.

h.

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

To renew call Telephone Center, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

MAR 3 1983

L161—O-1096

LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

823
R952w

NEW POPULAR 6s. NOVELS

Anne Judge, Spinster. By F. W. Robinson,

Author of "Grandmother's Money," "The Woman in the Dark," Etc.

[*Cheap and Second Edition.*

The Athenæum.—"Mr Robinson's reputation as a novel writer will not be diminished by the present work. It gives us remarkable pleasure to be able to speak of a novel in terms of praise. . . . We chronicle the appearance of this book with satisfaction. We must specially mention the hero as being uncommonly well drawn, for he is original, natural, and interesting. Altogether we commend this book to the public."

The Mystery of Monkswood. By Mrs Lodge,

Author of "A Son of the Gods," Etc.

Daily Telegraph.—"A story which is unquestionably fraught with sustained interest from its first page to its last. Its heroine, Mona Wilford, is a really charming girl. . . . We must refer our readers to the text of Mrs Lodge's graphic and indisputably engrossing romance."

A Roman Mystery. By Richard Bagot.

Spectator.—"Mr Bagot has given us a most interesting book. The portraiture is often excellent, and the author's intimate knowledge of Italian society is manifested at every turn."

The Desire of Men. By L. T. Meade.

St James's Budget.—"'The Desire of Men' is not the sort of book to read on a wild winter's night when one is alone in the house. It has to do with a species of human vampire; its leading idea is the possibility of old age staving off death by preying on the vitality of youth. It would be a crime to spoil the treat which awaits lovers of the supernatural and uncanny in Mr Meade's pages."

Adventures of Rosalie Stuart. By W. Shaw,

Author of "Golden Dreams and Waking Realities," Etc.

Daily Chronicle.—"There is a fund of entertainment in this rattling story. We must frankly own that it has merit, being rich in ingenious incidents, and racy with the flavour of rural England at the time."

A Torn-out Page. By Dora Russell.

Glasgow Herald.—"Miss Russell's latest story is cleverly thought out and planned. The scenes are in many cases distinctly clever. . . . It is seldom we come across a book which is at once so healthy and exciting, and for that reason alone it should find favour with many."

The Red-Headed Man. By Fergus Hume.

World.—"The best piece of work that Mr Fergus Hume has given us since he wrote 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab.' The tale contains not a single dull chapter."

A Crazy Moment. By Sarah Tytler.

Manchester Guardian says:—"It is one of the best of Miss Sarah Tytler's stories."

The Prince's Feathers. By Mrs Leith-Adams.

Birmingham Gazette.—"One of the most charming stories we have seen of late. It will be read with pleasure by old and young, who cannot fail to be fascinated by its delicate pathos, clever characterisation, and graceful style."

The Secret of Mark Pepys. By F. J. Proctor.

Scotsman.—"This is a story of love and adventure in a troubled region of Mexico during the troubled period immediately before the American annexation of California. The story is strongly constructed, and possesses the merit of being written in a vigorous and picturesque style."

Beyond these Dreams. By G. B. Fitzgerald,

Author of "The Stigma," "An Odd Career," Etc.

Liverpool Post.—"A very powerful story. It is the history of a very lovely woman. The tale is cleverly told. Originality of thought and expression characterise the whole book."

WAYWARD HEARTS

WAYWARD HEARTS

A Novel

BY

DARBY RYAN

'La vie ne peut jamais être tout à fait heureuse, parce qu'elle n'est pas le ciel, ni tout à fait malheureuse parce qu'elle en est le chemin.'

London
DIGBY, LONG & CO.
18 Bouverie Street, Fleet Street, E.C.
1900

[*All Rights reserved*]

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

https://archive.org/details/waywardheartsnov00ryan

823
R952w

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	SWEET ADDIE,	1
II.	QUAINT LITTLE NAN,	21
III.	LITTLE SUNBEAM,	40
IV.	LITTLE FOLKS,	53
V.	A SPOILED CHILD OF FASHION,	68
VI.	A LITTLE STORY-TELLER,	96
VII.	A COURT BEAUTY,	131
VIII.	NINA'S BIRTHDAY,	145
IX.	A WALK BY THE SEASHORE,	156
X.	ADDIES' WISH,	178
IX.	WANDERINGS,	189
XII.	GONE AWAY,	200

State Library

CHAP. PAGE

XIII. THE LADY HELEN, ... 211

XIV. THE FIERY YOUTH AND THE GLOOMY KNIGHT, ... 224

XV. A CONSTANT HEART, ... 238

XVI. HAPPY HEARTS, ... 250

XVII. GOOD-BYE, LITTLE SUNBEAM, . . 262

XVIII. NINA'S 'HAULING HOME,' 289

7

Wayward Hearts

CHAPTER I

SWEET ADDIE

'The dawn of life was breaking
In beauty on her face;
Her brow was like an angel's,
All innocence and grace.'

A FAIR summer landscape. Over hill and dale the sun is brightly shining. Birds are singing in the trees, wild roses blooming in the hedges, and flowers are everywhere. Truth to tell, all Nature seems rejoicing this glorious June afternoon.

Seated under an old oak tree in her father's lawn is Addie Grey, only daughter of Major Grey, a retired army officer. She is resting on the grass

with an open book before her, and her large sun hat thrown carelessly at her side, but though her book is open, Addie is not reading. She is drinking in the beauty of that glorious summer scene.

How sweet and bright everything looked, and how green! Especially the grand old-fashioned lawn with its big trees, centuries old, each one of which were to Addie as true, tried friends who had shared her joys and sorrows since babyhood. And old friends they have been in truth, for many and many a romp and hide-and-go-seek Addie had round them; and yonder is that big ash one with the hole in its trunk—it made a doll's house for her in her baby days, and now her little brother Louie uses it to hide some precious toys in, lest Harry, the mischievous one, might break them

There, to the right, Addie can catch a glimpse of the wild Atlantic, but not wild this afternoon, only looking delici-

ously dangerous all the same, for now and again a huge wave will rise and come foaming in, dashing itself with wild fury against the rocks, and then receding with a gentle murmur, like a big giant in his sleep, who dreams and mutters of big doings and brave deeds. Then all is calm again, and the little boats skipping on its treacherous waters, glide as calmly as if the sea were a big artificial lake, that never knew tempest or storm, or the shipwreck of mighty ships that brought sorrow and heart-break to many a home.

Addie dreams of such like and other things, sweet daydreams of childhood and early girlhood get mixed up together. Then she catches a glimpse of her own old home peeping through the trees, with its cluster of roses and ivy covering its old weather-beaten walls, making it somewhat damp and cold in winter, notwithstanding its southern and magnificent aspect, for Addie's home was once an old manor facing the sea

on the southern coast of Ireland; but I daresay there is no trace of it now, save its old ivy-mantled walls perhaps, for my story is of long ago, and has nothing to do with new-fashioned ways, and yet my little folks lived and suffered, and had their little joys and sorrows, just as big folks and little folks have nowadays.

The girl's eyes rests lovingly on her dear old home. What a bright, what a happy one it has been to her! Never yet has sorrow entered, never did the wild waves sing anything but glad songs for Addie. And the green fields, the sunny meadows, the big park, the shady glens, with their little brooks eternal rippling and cooing, all have bright memoirs for sweet Addie, with her soft auburn tresses falling loosely over her shoulders, and her deep blue eyes that change and vary in their expression as often as the Irish sky itself. Now laughing with mirth, now thoughtful and grave, but always shining with bright candour and childlike inno-

cence, telling of a deep lovable nature and plenty of character withal.

Addie sits thus for some time, but now her daydreams are going to be disturbed, for the big boughs are parted gently at her back, and a mischievous-looking boy of twelve or thereabouts comes stealing tiptoe behind. His straw hat is not on his head as it should be this warm afternoon, but in his hand, and it is full of roses, delicious roses, deep crimson and white.

When the boy gets near enough he showers them down on the girl's silken tresses, saying, 'Wake up, Queen Mab, and don't stop dreaming here all day.'

Addie looked round with a start, and then she laughed. It was only her wild, untamed brother Harry playing off one of his saucy pranks; she might have easily guessed it beforehand.

'Why, Harry, how came you to be here? Are your studies over already?'

'Oh, bother studies, Addie, they are, and they are not. To tell you the truth,

continued Harry in an undertone, as if he were afraid the very trees would hear and chide him for his fib, 'I told the old Fox—his tutor—that I had a headache, so he gave me half-an-hour for a run to get my head into good brain-working order. I crabbed the pony in the stable as I came along, and now I am on for a good jolly ride by the sea road. If old Fox,' continued the boy, 'is looking for me, you can tell him I am gone to the war.'

As he spoke, Harry untied the reins of his pony which he had secured to the branch of a tree whilst he was playing off his prank on Addie, and now without more ado the boy mounted on its back, and with a wild whoop that would have done credit to a wild Indian in the backwoods of America, he was off, and out of sight, before his sister had time to remonstrate or recover from her surprise.

Addie sighed just a little, and picked up the roses one by one, putting them into her hat as she did so, picked them up very slowly and half dreamingly, for her thoughts

were with that truant brother of hers, who was never out of scrapes, and whose destiny seemed to throw a damp and cloud on everything, and mar all enjoyments.

Now the girl, somewhat thoughtful, with the roses in her hat, turned homewards, but presently the cloud caused by Harry passed away, for her little brother Louie, just released from the schoolroom, seeing his sister on the lawn, came running up.

He was a bright boy was little Louie, with a dash and a go in him, that made you think of brave men in battle, and wonder would he be a soldier yet. And if you asked him, he would tell you, with flashing eyes, a soldier he would be, but not an English one, no, he would go and win fame in foreign lands, and under a foreign flag.

Dark in cheek, and hair, and eye, like his father, with a warm, impetuous nature, and a keen sense of right and wrong, nothing roused him, and made him so quite beside himself, as injustice or mean

tricks, and as Harry was always playing off the latter on him, the two brothers never agreed, it was always open war. Only for Addie, who acted as peacemaker, they would have a sorry time of it, I am afraid.

Louie came bounding now towards Addie, his long black curls dancing, dancing as his own little heart danced just then, for he was just liberated from lessons and tasks, horrid books to Louie's mind, books that should have been burned long before he was born. But now, for to-day anyhow, school hours were gone, and the whole afternoon till bedtime was for play.

'Addie, what roses you have got! Delicious!' exclaimed the child, burying his two little hands in them. 'Wherever did you get them, sister?'

'From Harry, who has but just gone away mounted on the pony. That mad brother of ours,' added the girl, laughingly, awoke me from daydreams with those roses, Louie.

'Harry mounted on the pony, Addie?' Oh, how could he? Why, he only got leave to take a few turns round the garden. He has all his Latin tasks before him,' continued Louie, 'and he promised faithfully to return. It's mean of him to break his word, that it is,' added the boy, hotly.

'Hush, Louie, let us say no more about Harry. Come to the garden and play hide-and-seek.'

'Addie, you are a brick, you are always ready to play with me; but let us first look at my rose trees, they are in splendid bloom now.'

The child, as he spoke, put his little hand into his sister's, and running hand in hand the children soon gained the garden and Louie's rose trees. But alas! no roses were there, only a few leaves, and, underneath the rose trees, some scattered rose leaves.

For a moment Louie did not speak, and Addie in her astonishment found nothing to say either, but soon the boy's eyes

flashed fire, grief and anger seemed to have a struggle within, tears rose to his eyes, but he dashed them away with his hand, and, stamping his foot, passionately cried,—

'Tis all Harry's doings, I know it is, and those are my roses,' he said, pointing to the ones in Addie's hat. 'He did it all to vex me,' added the boy, bitterly. 'Oh, I know he did; a horrid, mean, spiteful chap, not worth a straw, and I despise and hate him.'

Now Louie did not mean all he said, as Addie knew full well. She knew his warm little heart could hate nobody very long, so she only took him in her arms and kissed him, saying very gently,—

'Poor little Louie, your roses are gone, that's true, and I am so sorry; but come to my little garden, and you shall have my nicest flowers, anything you like, you have only to choose. Come.'

'No thank you, Addie,' answered the boy, proudly, for his little heart was still sore and wrath against his brother; 'but

I should like to have my roses, and I'll pay Harry back for this trick yet, you'll find I shall,' he added passionately.

The child could no longer restrain his tears, they came streaming down his face now like two fountains, and sliding from his sister's arms, he threw himself upon the ground, then covered his face with his hands, and sobbed as if his little heart would break.

Now Addie, and everyone at Grey Manor knew that the boy had a passion for flowers, especially roses, and those two rose trees he claimed as his own ever since he was a tiny baby. No wonder then that poor Louie should be very wrath this bright June afternoon, and very wrath he was. Indeed in such a temper as Addie rarely saw him, but the girl knew how to manage that hot, impetuous little heart, and with a few coaxing words, and a tact that was all sweet Addie's own, she brought round her little brother to a gentler mood.

Then after telling him some stories of

boys who did brave things on land and sea—that was Louie's delight—she proposed a game of hide-and-go-seek, and soon the children were chasing each other gaily round the garden, Louie screaming with delight, and enjoying the play with as light a heart as if Harry had never taken his roses.

'Addie, love, I want to speak to you. Louie can play by himself for a little while.'

It was Mrs Grey who spoke. She stood at the glass door leading from the back of the house into the garden.

Addie ran at her mother's call, and they both entered the old Manor, leaving Louie playing now at horses all alone.

Mrs Grey, placing her hand on Addie's shoulder, brought her into a little sitting-room—the 'green room' it was called. There afternoon tea was always served when there was no company, and there the major and his wife read, and talked, and studied the long summer afternoons.

Tea was already served at the little gipsy table. Addie poured it out, and after helping her father and mother, poured out one for herself. Then taking her cup in her hand, full to the brim with the fresh, steaming tea—for Addie dearly loved a cup of tea—the girl went and sat on the sofa by her mother's side.

'Well, mother, darling, what have you got to say to me?'

'Take your tea first, Addie, love, and see if your father does not want a second cup, and then I shall tell you. The subject is a serious one,' continued her mother. 'Your father and I have been talking over it all this afternoon. Everything is finally decided now, and nothing remains but to see what our little daughter thinks about it,' added Mrs Grey, fondly kissing the young girl's cheek.

Her mother's face was very serious as she spoke. Addie wondered why. And more astonished still was she when her father, putting away his cup of half untouched tea, said in a gruff, moody kind

of way, 'Talk about it at once, Mary, and be done with it.'

Mrs Grey, thus ordered, was bound to obey. She knew the major's moods. Harsh he was sometimes, even with his wife, but always through life straight and honest. With sweet Addie he was ever gentle; he never had a gruff word for her. This afternoon he seemed in one of his blue moods, and when he ordered his wife to speak out, 'twas in no gentle voice he said it.

Addie left her mother's side, and placing her cup of untouched tea on the little gipsy table, went and stood by her father's chair. That simple act seemed to overcome the major, for he put his hands to his face, and Addie saw tears streaming through his fingers. Then the strong, gruff man wept, wept just as little Louie had done an hour ago about his roses; but Louie's tears were child's tears, easily brought, and easily dried, but to see the major cry, to see that blunt, gruff heart overcome, ah! that was a different thing. Those were not child's

tears, they were the tears of a strong man, who had never within Addie's remembrance wept before.

'Father, why—' then Addie stopped, she dared not ask the cause of his sorrow. Her mother beckoned her towards her, and Addie went and sat again by her side. The major now took away his hands from his face, wiped his eyes with his handkerchief and blew his nose, wiped his eyes again, and his forehead this time, as if it were only too hot he was, blew his nose a second time, then, putting away his handkerchief, said in as gruff a voice as he could, 'Well, Mary, when are you going to begin?'

Mrs Grey, thus appealed to, took Addie's hand in both of hers, and said in her own gentle way 'Addie, love, your father and I have been talking about you this afternoon, and about the boys too. We know what influence you have over both, and how you are able to make peace when war is proclaimed. But Addie, love, though I don't know how we can man-

age Harry without you, still your father and I think it best that you should complete your education in France; we wish you to speak that language fluently. Your aunt, who lives in Paris, wishes you to go over for some years, so we have decided to let you go for three. Then my Addie will come home, I suppose,' added Mrs Grey, smiling through her tears, 'a grand French lady, no longer like our sweet Addie of old, but a fashionable dame, full of whims and fancies, and clatter French the whole day long.'

'What nonsense you talk, Mary,' put in the major; 'as if,' he added, 'our Addie could ever be but what she is, the sweetest flower in this old Manor. Come here, Addie, child, and tell me what you think about your going away and not coming home for three years?'

Addie went and stood again at her father's chair, and putting her fingers through his soft, white curly hair—the major was grey though he was not yet fifty — said warmly, and with her voice

choked with tears, 'Truth to tell, father, I don't like it at all. I think it's very cruel to send me away; it's real banishment. Why, oh, why, do you do it?'

'My sweet child,' said the major, in that gentle voice he always used when talking to Addie, ''tis for your good, my love. We wish you to be highly accomplished, and by-and-by, when our Addie comes home, she will shine in society, but, meantime,' he added sadly, 'I confess this old Manor will be very lonely without you. I know I'll miss my little daughter very much, but we shall go from time to time to see you, and though you won't see your old home, Addie, for three years—on that we have decided, we think it best—still you shall see us, my child, for a few weeks every summer. Then your long holidays you shall spend with your aunt at the seaside or in the country at her castle, and so amuse yourself. Then, after all, three years won't be so long passing,' added the major, cheerfully, 'and we won't feel the time when we shall have our little

daughter with us once more; and now, child,' continued the major, 'I must ask you to leave me. I have some important business letters to write—pressing letters, that must be written. Give me a pen and ink, Addie, and some paper, and ring the bell for Peter to take away this tea-tray, and then leave me, child, for I must have quiet.'

Addie kissed her father's forehead, rang the bell as he told her, placed a small writing-table at his side, with pens and ink and paper upon it, and then went out into the garden, her eyes blinded with tears.

That was a busy afternoon for Addie. First she joined her little brother, and broke the news to him as best she could, getting him to promise that he would do his best to be friends with Harry whilst she would be away.

'But you know, sister,' said the boy, earnestly, 'to promise to do my best to keep friends is not saying that Harry and I won't have an odd row now and again, for he has a mean way of teasing, and I have a hot temper.'

'My little Louie, I know you are not a saint. You have promised to do your best; that's all I ask or can expect,' and, as Addie spoke, she kissed the little solemn, serious face, and through the bright, earnest eyes, looking up at her, she could read, that for Louie that promise was no baby promise, but a solemn, earnest undertaking, a promise to be remembered and kept in after years.

Then came Louie's bedtime, and a half-an-hour after Harry came stealing home. By stealth he got the pony into the stable. Then he let himself into the garden by scaling the low wall, and thought he could go from that into the house unobserved. But Addie was there and saw him, indeed she had been waiting for his coming. She was up to Harry's tricks, and guessed he would pass that way. She went to him now, and, linking her arm through his, said, after her own sweet fashion, 'Harry, Mr Fox is very angry, I am afraid he will tell father. Come with me and I shall get you off this time.'

'I don't want anyone to get me off,' answered Harry in his sullen way. 'Let old Fox do his worst.'

'And get you horse-whipped! Is that what you want? Nonsense, Harry, don't be such a goose. Come, let me try my influence this once.'

They went, brother and sister, into the old Manor, and up the big, old-fashioned staircase. When they got to the study room they found the old tutor very wrath indeed with his incorrigible pupil, and with strong notions of having him horse-whipped. But Addie pleaded for that wayward boy with a tact all her own. She had a way about her that no one could resist. Harry was respited for that evening at least, for even the old tutor with all his wrath could not refuse sweet Addie.

CHAPTER II

QUAINT LITTLE NAN

'For as gold is tried by fire
So a heart must be tried by pain.'

THREE months have passed away. Squire O'Connor of Oakland Hall, as he sits at his breakfast on a bright September morning, looks carelessly through a pile of letters at his side. Business letters they all seem to be, but he selects one from the rest, reads it, and passes it to his sister, Miss O'Connor, who is occupied at the foot of the table pouring out the tea.

She is a maiden lady who has devoted all her time and care to the bringing up of the squire's motherless child, little Nannie O'Connor, the heiress of Oakland Hall.

'That is an invitation,' he explained, as he handed the letter to his sister. 'An invitation,' added the squire, in his hearty,

pleasant way, 'that I think my little Nan will be pleased to hear about. Eh, Nan, a children's afternoon tea-party?'

'And I can go, can't I, father?'

'Yes, little one, if your aunt has no objection.'

'Oh! Aunt Sarah never has,' answered the child, confidently. 'I can count on her permission beforehand; can't I, aunty?'

'Yes, dear, I certainly could not object to your going, especially as it is a farewell dance given for Addie Grey before her departure for France, and I daresay you will meet all your little friends at Grey Manor on Wednesday afternoon.'

'Oh, aunty, how glad I am. Joy! joy!' and the little heiress of Oakland Hall clapped her hands, and leaving her chair very unceremoniously, ran up to where her aunt sat very stiff and solemn midst her teacups. Then poor Aunt Sarah got a most unmerciful hugging and kissing, and though she called out several times, stop, that's enough, child, that's enough, Nannie did not seem to heed. At last, after a final

hug, which pulled Aunt Sarah's chignon all one side, and put stray bits of hair on her forehead, that were always brushed back stiff and straight, after doing all that mischief, and ruffling Aunt Sarah's white high collar into the bargain, the little heiress of Oakland Hall regained her seat and continued her breakfast.

The squire had been looking on all the time with a hearty, pleasant look on his rosy, good-humoured face. It was a pleasure to him to see his little motherless Nan so happy, and more especially as it was seldom she indulged in gay freaks. As a rule she was a quiet, reserved child was little Nan, with a pale, rather wistful little face, and great big hazel eyes, eyes that looked into yours in a dreamy way, with a far-off look about them. And sometimes, when in one of her serious moods, she would come and sit by her father's side, and talk in her strange, quaint, old-fashioned way, with her big hazel eyes and their wistful look about them, looking into his, then at such times a

shadow would cross the father's face, and in his heart would be a throb of pain, for that strange, far-off look on his child's face was exactly like that of his wife's before she died. And at times, to Nannie's wonder, the squire would stand up and leave the room abruptly, for the thought that perhaps his little one would follow his wife to an early grave was more than he could bear.

'Aunty, will Helen Plunkett be at the children's dance?'

'Certainly, Nan. Why do you ask?'

'Oh! because she is such a dreadful critic,' answered the child, 'and has a scornful way about her that I don't like. She is always so at children's dances,' continued little Nan, 'and seems to think all little folks beneath her notice.'

Aunt Sarah smiled.

'So, little Nan, you stand in awe of Helen Plunkett?'

'Not in awe, aunty, no, but still somehow I always feel more at ease when Helen is not in the room. She carries her

head so high, and has as many airs as if she were a queen, and all the little folks her subjects,' added the quaint child, with an old-fashioned shake of her head.

'Very rebellious subjects you would all make,' said her father, laughing; 'and now,' he continued, 'as breakfast is over, and the morning fine, I think you ought to take a run in the garden with Ponto. Aunt Sarah won't call you to lessons for another while.'

'Not until this afternoon,' answered her aunt. 'Nannie has a half holiday to-day; she worked very hard last week, and merits it. Besides,' added Aunt Sarah, 'I shall be busy this morning, as I have some changes to make in her little evening dress for this children's dance.'

'Then make the most of your half holiday, child,' said the father. 'Take Ponto, and remain out of doors till luncheon.'

Nannie, nothing loath, soon had her little hat and jacket on, and with her faithful Ponto running at her side, had a gay time of it in the garden that morning.

For hours they ran and played together, but at last the child, heated and flushed, and out of breath, sat on one of the garden seats, and calling Ponto, bade him lie down, then patted his neck, saying, 'Now, Ponto, you big, woolly old Ponto, you and I shall sit sedate and prim like big people, and have a nice little chat together. Eh, Ponto?'

The dog wagged his tail, and looked up at his little mistress as if he understood all.

'Now,' continued quaint little Nan, 'you must know, Ponto, that I am invited to a children's dance; it is to come off next Wednesday afternoon, and aunty is arranging my dress for it, so I expect I'll be very nice. However, about that I don't much mind, for between you and I, Ponto, it's not worth a thought. Your little mistress has too tiny and pale a face, and her little figure is too small, for people to occupy themselves about her. She was never made to shine, Ponto, she is only a quaint, old-fashioned

little thing, as Ernest M'Mahon calls her. He always says "quaint little Nan," and never speaks of me after any other fashion, as if I were no more, Ponto, than a quaint, old-fashioned little china figure. Indeed, he once compared me to one. 'Tis true, Ponto, he did, that dreadful tease of an Ernest. He is a horrid boy, to laugh and mock so at the little heiress of Oakland Hall. Don't you think so, Ponto? To be sure you do, and now I shall put that Ernest aside, and talk no more about him, because he is such a tease.'

For a long time the child rambled on, talking to her dog as if he were a friend, and a friend he was for little Nan, a friend and playmate both together. To him Nan told all her joys and griefs. No pleasure had she without Ponto sharing it, and in all her walks and drives the faithful dog accompanied the quaint, old-fashioned child, his little mistress, the heiress of Oakland Hall.

Now we must take a peep at Helen

Plunkett and her home. Helen, that our little Nan seemed to stand so much in awe of. But to do so we must leave the bright green fields and sunny dales, and betake ourselves to the southern capital, the city by the Lee.

'Tis a big, roomy house is Helen's home, an old-fashioned house, that might have been built since the reign of Queen Anne, or even in the good old times of the giants and fairies, for it had nooks and corridors without end, and long galleries too, and state-rooms, where goblins and fairy queens and their little court might have held gay revels in the good old days gone by.

It was oddly furnished too was this strange house, in a queer, old-fashioned lumbering fashion, with no attempt to make it modern or pleasing to the eyes of up-to-date folks. And yet its mistress, the present Mrs Plunkett, was a fashionable dame, who attended from time to time balls at Dublin Castle, and mixed —as people have it—in 'high society.'

But no receptions took place in Helen's old home by the Lee. The cheerless old house seldom heard within its walls gay laughter. A dull home it was, with nothing bright about it, nor did any of its inmates try to make it otherwise, none, except perhaps poor Perry, who had always a bright smile and a bright word for everyone, though the poor boy had enough to make him sad, for he was blind from his birth. Resigned he was to his fate, and in his cheery way he did his best to make things go on as smooth as possible in his father's house.

The present Mrs Plunkett was only Helen and Perry's stepmother. She had three children of her own. Little four-year-old Emily, and her two brothers George and Fred, six and seven. Perry was twelve and his sister Helen seventeen.

A beautiful girl was Helen, but very haughty and wilful, and difficult to manage. Her stepmother was a lazy,

indolent woman, who never seemed to think it was her duty or task to look after her household. She boxed her children's ears if they screamed, or did not obey her, but it mattered not to that indolent woman if they obeyed no one else, and truth to tell they did not, except Helen. They were afraid of her, and stood as much in awe of their 'big sister,' as they called her, as little Nan herself.

They were a lawless pack were those three small youngsters, and spent the most of their leisure time kicking and fighting and screaming. They ran upstairs and downstairs, and through corridors and empty rooms, and in their lawless, noisy way did just as they liked, with no idea of obeying anyone except their mother when she boxed their ears, or Helen when she gave them a shaking. But that did not often happen, for their mother was too indolent to mind them, and Helen was seldom indoors, or, if she were, she was with

her brother Perry, who occupied rooms in a different wing of the house, far away from the nursery or the children's quarters, so the young fry as a rule had a lively, noisy time of it. Now crying, now laughing, now pulling each other's hair, enjoying themselves after their wild fashion in a screaming, lawless kind of way, and defying all authority and control. Such was their bringing up, and such was Helen Plunkett's old home by the Lee.

'Nellie, dear, what about this afternoon dance, this children's party; are you going to it?'

It was Perry who spoke, he was in his own 'little boudoir,' as he called it. A bright, cheerful little room, with a southern aspect. Poor Perry! not alone was he blind, but he was an invalid also, and seldom left that little boudoir, or his big arm-chair. Suffering he was always, but with such gentle patience, that few, if any, except perhaps the doctor and Helen, guessed how weak

the boy was, or how much he suffered.

The girl was deeply attached to her brother, indeed it was the one redeeming point in her character, her unselfish love for the blind boy. Helen, this autumn afternoon, was sitting on a low stool at his feet, 'twas her favourite place, and there she would often read or talk to Perry for hours together. Now, as the blind boy put his question to her, the girl's hand was in his, but when he spoke of that afternoon dance, Helen drew her hand abruptly away, and said, in her petulant, hasty fashion,—

'For pity sake, Perry, don't talk about that child dance. I suppose I must go with mother and the youngsters; but 'tis dreadful to be obliged to remain a whole afternoon with a baby crew.'

'Nay, sister mine, not quite a baby crew. Addie Grey is almost fifteen, Harry twelve, then Ernest M'Mahon is sixteen, Nannie O'Connor—though everyone says she does not look it—is eleven,

and Dr Fitzpatrick's family here in town, where do you put them, Nellie? Why, Captain Hugh is twenty-four, and Tim nineteen, and then the other ten all sizes and all ages. Carrie and Flora are about your own age, and Dick not much younger. There, Nellie, is your baby crew! Big babies, eh, Nell? And,' continued the boy, laughingly, 'what a fine baby Captain Hugh is, a giant's baby, such a baby as would do credit to a Finn MacCoul. Don't you think so, Nell?'

'But who said Hugh would be there, Perry?'

'Why, Tim, of course, my old gossiper, who brings me all news of the town and its doings. Whilst you were out walking this morning,' continued Perry, 'he called in, and desired me tell you, Nellie, that he would expect you to keep at least four dances for him. Tim says that of late you have been mighty haughty, and won't scarcely notice him, but as you are so pretty, so very pretty, he puts up with your whims. Still you have his heart

torn in twain, and unless you bestow a smile now and again on the poor student who worships at your shrine, you will drive him to despair.'

The boy laughed as he delivered Tim's message, but Helen only shrugged her shoulders, saying in a haughty, scornful way, and as if the subject were a weary one, 'He is insupportable is that Tim, with his admiration, and then he is such a gossip besides; even his own secrets he can't keep, and when he falls in love the whole town knows it. But people don't much mind him now,' continued the girl, with a toss of her head. 'They are used to his mad freaks, always getting into scrapes or rows, or falling in love, or doing other such mad things.'

'Nay, Nellie, you are rather hard on the poor lad, and he such an admirer of yours,' put in Perry. 'He even says,' continued the boy, laughingly, 'that if Hugh, though he is six feet in height, pays you any attention this afternoon, he, Tim, will thrash him and beat him to mummy.'

Helen coloured. It was just like Tim's silly talk, she knew; and nobody minded Tim, a boaster, and a good-for-nothing, easy-going, amusing chap was Tim, and few paid heed to what he said. Still it vexed the girl more than she would care to admit even to herself, that this prating Tim should so mix up her name with Hugh's, and she answered warmly, 'I would vote to have Tim tried by court-martial, and shot; and I promise you, Perry,' continued the girl, 'I won't give him even one dance this afternoon; that mad scamp must be brought to his senses, and brought to his senses he shall be by me.'

Perry laughed. Helen's temper over Hugh and Tim seemed to amuse him. Still he answered rather gravely, 'Nay, Nellie, for my sake you must not be too severe or exacting with poor Tim. You know when you are from home he is my only resource. He always finds time to come in and gossip, and tell droll stories. And though he talks about other people, he

never says really unkind things, but he says everything after such a droll fashion, and in such a droll way, that he amuses me highly, so, for my sake, Nellie,' continued the boy, 'give him at least one dance this evening.'

'Well, perhaps for your sake, Perry,' said the girl, in softened tones, 'and now it is time I should go dress, but I shall come in to say good-night before I go.'

She kissed him as she spoke, and, calling his boy attendant, who was always near at hand, left the room.

On her way upstairs she found Emily kicking at the nursery door, and screaming to get in; but immediately that Helen made her appearance, the kicking ceased as if by magic, and Emily brushed away with the back of her hand, as best she could, the tears from her little, thin sallow cheeks.

The child was by no means pretty; indeed her mother declared she was downright plain-looking, and to her worldly mind that was an unpardonable

drawback. So poor Emily was never presented to anyone, or kissed, or petted, as she might have been had she been pretty. A wild, untamed little sprite, who got her ears boxed by her mother when she cried, or perhaps a shaking from Helen, or pushed about by the nurse. Often kicked and spat upon by Fred and George when they were in bad humour, and who in return kicked whenever she could herself, and spat upon Fred and George, and broke their toys for vengeance, and did every mischief she could think of, with no one to coax her to a better mood or teach her the difference between right and wrong. Poor little Emily!

The maid this afternoon had put her out of the nursery, finding three too many to attend to, and George and Fred had to be prepared for this wonderful children's dance at Grey Manor. Emily was not going, she was too small, hence her bad humour.

Helen guessed all this at a glance, and without a word took the child by the

hand, and brought her to her own room, there bidding her squat herself down as best she could on the carpet, and not stir if she did not want a shaking.

Then Helen turned her back on the pouting child and rang the bell for her maid. The girl came with a beautiful bouquet of white flowers mixed with maidenhair fern. In between the leaves was a little note in a tiny pink envelope.

'It's Mr Tim Fitzpatrick who left it, miss,' explained the maid; 'but he told me not to give it till you would be going to dress.'

Helen, half vexed, half amused at Tim's gallantry, opened the note, which ran as follows:—

'DEAR MISS HELEN, — Wear these flowers to-night for the sake of one who loves you and adores you. TIM.'

Now the girl at another time perhaps would have worn the flowers, and laughed at Tim for his folly, but re-

membering his threat, and what he said to Perry about Hugh, she threw the bouquet carelessly on the dressing-table. Then an afterthought seemed to strike her, for she took the flowers and said to Emily,—

'Here, little one, take this bouquet to Perry, the flowers smell delightfully, and their perfume will please him; and you, my little scrap,' added Helen, 'can remain with Perry till your nurse is ready to attend to you.'

Emily, nothing loath, took the flowers, and scampered away as best her little legs would carry her. 'Twas a relief to get out of her big sister's room; now she could breathe freely anyhow without being afraid of a shaking.

CHAPTER III

LITTLE SUNBEAM

'Like a beam of mellow sunshine
That dances on the lea,
Or the perfume of the woodbine
Was that sweet child to me.'

'MOTHER, Ernest has invited me to spend the day with him, and we shall come here in the early afternoon for the Cinderella dance; may I go?'

'Yes, as it pleases you, Harry; but be sure you play off no mad pranks at Crag Castle, for Mrs M'Mahon does not like anything that way.'

'Oh! have no fear, mother, I shall be as good as gold, and as prim as an old maid;' and whistling for his dogs, Harry set off at a brisk pace for Crag Castle, which was not more than a mile distant,

and not even that by a short cut through the fields.

Harry Grey and Ernest M'Mahon were great chums, and the boys spent the most of their idle hours together. Now fishing, now shooting, now hunting, or perhaps playing with little Nina, who had come to look upon Harry as a second brother, and loved him after a child fashion of her own. Loved him, as she might a big toy or doll, to play with and amuse her, and put up with her whims and fancies, such was Nina's friendship for Harry Grey in her baby days.

Ernest and Nina were only half-brother and sister, but Edith M'Mahon was a true mother for the boy, and watched over his bringing-up as carefully as if he were her own child. She saw the firm boy friendship that existed between her stepson and Harry, and knew that the latter's company was a welcome boon to Ernest, who had no brother of his own. And yet she, Edith, would have wished it otherwise, — wished that her

boy and Harry were as far divided as the poles, for Edith M'Mahon never could care for Harry Grey. His ways and his character did not please her at all.

Brought up severely herself in her English home, she had hard, strict notions about everything, but just ones too, and though cold by nature, Edith could be a true friend in need, and be always trusted to do her duty faithfully. So Ernest's father knew when he made her his bride, and it was more that his boy might have a mother than for fancy sake Arthur M'Mahon married a second time. For his was one of those natures who cannot forget, and though he always had a sweet smile for his second bride, yet on Arthur M'Mahon's face there rested—and would always rest, Edith knew—a grave, sad expression. And the lines on the high white forehead, and round the handsome mouth, and the white, silver threads shining through the bright chestnut hair, all these had come in sorrow's train, they were grief's own marks. They

had come to him the week his fair young wife was laid in her last resting-place. They had come, but they went not, they remained as landmarks of the past—landmarks never to be forgotten.

Yet Arthur M'Mahon was by no means a moody man, and Edith made his home a bright and happy one, and in her cold but kindly way smoothed her husband's life, and as best she could tried to be a true mother to his motherless boy.

Then came little Nina, a merry little sprite, a bright, dancing fairy, never at rest, running hither and thither like a sunny sunbeam, bringing joy and brightness to all, and filling the old ancestral castle of the M'Mahons with gay childish laughter. Making all hearts happy and glad, loved by everyone, and spoiled by all, except perhaps her judicious mother. A whimsical, capricious, dancing, merry, bright little sprite. One of those happy, laughing natures that seem born to cast sunshine wherever they go, bringing joy

and happiness to all,—such was little bewitching Nina.

Harry, with his long strides, was soon at Crag Castle. He met Ernest on the avenue, already impatient, looking out for his coming.

'You are late, old chum,' he remarked, as the boys passed into the Castle. 'Why did you not come earlier?'

'Blame Addie,' answered Harry, laughingly. 'That fair sister of mine,' added the boy, 'kept the gardener and me all the early morning putting up magic lanterns in the trees in the old garden, and weaving garlands of flowers and leaves, and I know not what besides. Why, the old Manor will be like a fairy castle to-night,' continued Harry, gaily, 'and so I told Addie this morning, and told her also she would be our fairy queen, and of course the queen must choose a king, so be sure to put on your best war-paint, Ernest, for I have a notion 'tis on you her choice will fall.'

Now, had Harry looked at his boy

chum as he prated thus, he would have seen that he turned crimson, but, boy-like, he paid no attention. Ernest knew that Harry spoke nonsense, and yet the mention of sweet Addie, and her choosing him for king, moved a heart-string in his boy heart, and put the warm blood rushing into his face.

Not wishing to meet his mother or anyone for the moment with that tell-tale blush, he said to Harry, 'Come to the nursery; little Nina is a prisoner there, and shall be glad to see you.'

'Nina a prisoner, Ernest! and why?'

'Oh! the little lady was out of sorts this morning, and so got into trouble. 'Twas all about a doll; but Nina shall explain it herself, so come along.'

The boys bounded up the stairs, and had soon left three flights behind. Then they stood breathless at the nursery door, which was ajar, and standing there, they saw the little lady of the nursery, little Nina herself, squatted on the floor, a broken doll in her lap, and a pout on her

little lips. Behind her, on a shelf, were ranged dolls of all descriptions—big dolls, little dolls, china dolls, wooden dolls, wax dolls, some without arms, some without legs, some dressed as brides, others as peasants, others again gorgeously attired in court dresses and sitting in state.

But the little lady of the nursery disregarded them all this morning. She sat squatted on the floor, and paid heed to naught else except her broken doll, her favourite one, that the maid, sweeping out the room, had accidently knocked down and then walked on. For that Miss Nina had got into a temper, and stamping her foot upon the floor, screamed with all her might.

In the midst of the uproar her mother came in, and bade Nina remain in the nursery till she would be in a better mood and ready to ask pardon for her naughtiness. So Miss Nina sits now in disgrace. She has spent the greater part of the morning crying over her doll, the tears are dried up now, but the doll is still mourned

for, and the little lady of the nursery has not yet made up her mind about asking pardon, for her doll is there before her, and each time she looks at it, and thinks what a cherished little dolly it was, so much more loved than all the others, then the heart of the little lady of the nursery swells with anger, and she is quite ready to stamp her little foot and scream again.

As a rule Nina was glad to see Harry, but to-day she only pouted, and bent her little head over her cherished doll, bent it lower and lower, till all her bright, sunny curls fell like a golden veil round her little broken plaything, and covered her own little baby face like a golden cloud.

'So little Sunbeam has nothing to say to us, no good-morning?' said Ernest in his coaxing way. 'Come, Nina,' he continued, 'look up, and tell Harry you are glad to see him.'

But for answer little Nina only covered her face with both her hands, and did not seem in a mood to welcome anyone.

'Now, Sunbeam, let us see,' continued Ernest, as he sat on the floor at the child's side, and took the broken doll in his hand, 'what's the matter with Dolly? Oh! her arms are broken, and an eye smashed in, and her nose has got a punching. Look Harry! how funny,' and Ernest laughingly was going to pass the broken plaything to Harry, when Nina, taking her hands from her face, and tossing back her golden cloud of curls, snatched the doll from her brother, saying in an angry, imperious little way,—

'Go away, Ernest, I won't have you here; leave me at once, I order you.'

For answer Ernest only laughed, and said, 'Now, Sunbeam, I say, don't get into one of your imperious moods or no one can stand your little ladyship. Do be good, and don't spend all your morning pouting over an old doll that's not worth a tear.'

'Is not she indeed?' answered Nina, with a toss of her sunny curls. 'She is worth a lot more, Ernest, than you. I love my

dolly,' continued the child, passionately, 'and I cried for her, but I would not for you, you nasty, old Ernest, if you went away, or got lost or broken, no, not even one tear.'

'Would you not, Sunbeam? Well, I must say you are very complimentary; but as I don't happen to be a doll, it's not likely I shall get broken. As for going away, that's another matter, but we are all going away this afternoon; as you know, Nina, we are going to Grey Manor, and I think, Sunbeam, if you wish to be pardoned and join the gay throng, you had better go at once to mother and say you are sorry. Now give me a kiss; and,' added the boy, in a gentle, coaxing tone, 'you forgive me, little Sunbeam, don't you?'

Now the child with her sunny nature knew not what it was to keep in a grudge, —as Harry would express it,—so Ernest got the kiss and the forgiveness, Nina remarking at the same time, with a wise shake of her golden curls,—

'You are a teasing, tormenting, mocking, old Ernest, but I forgive you all the same. And Harry, you are welcome,' continued the child, putting out her little hand to be shaken, in a gracious, yet half shy little fashion, a little way, all little Nina's own, that sat so well upon her, for she was half ashamed that Harry should see her in such high disgrace.

Harry took the little hand in his and shook it warmly. Strange, he sympathised with Nina and her doll breaking, he, Harry, the selfish one. The boy was almost ashamed of himself to feel so sorry for little Sunbeam's trouble. For once his ready tongue was silent, he left all the talking to Ernest. 'Twas something new to see Nina in such a temper and in such high disgrace. Wonder and something akin to sympathy kept Harry's prating tongue silent; he was troubled over little Nina's sorrow, but he said not a word as he took the little hand in his. Somehow the boy felt he would rather not have come up at all, and 'twas with

a sigh of relief he heard Ernest saying,—

'Let us go down, Nina; I think mother is in the breakfast-room sewing. Come and ask pardon for your naughtiness and then we can go play, and perhaps,' added the boy, coaxingly, 'I will tell you a story.'

'About fairies, Ernest, and enchanted castles, and giants, and a lot of pretty things like that you will put in your story, won't you, Ernest?'

'To be sure, Nina, or perhaps even a fairy prince or princess, or some such wonderful folk, so come along, my little Sunbeam, there is no time to be lost.'

Half-an-hour later Ernest and Harry and Nina were pelting each other with leaves,—early autumn leaves that a big storm had shaken down before their time; and Edith, as she watched the children from the window, where she sat over her embroidery, and saw how merry her little Nina was, could not help thinking that Ernest was right in calling her a little

sunbeam, for a bright sunbeam the little fairy looked, with her golden shower of curls, and her laughing, bewitching little ways, a pretty golden sunbeam, now covered with autumn leaves, now shaking them off, now dancing away like a little sprite, daring Ernest or Harry to overtake her with their leaves.

So Nina played, and so her mother watched her that bright autumn forenoon, and often in after years Edith thought of that life picture now before her—the merry child dancing hither and thither through the trees, a bright little sunbeam half covered with leaves, a gay, happy sunny nature, a winning, beautiful child, with her golden shower of sunny curls. Dear little Nina.

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE FOLKS

> 'Visions of my childhood! stay, oh, stay!
> Ye were so sweet and wild;
> And distant voices seemed to say,
> "It cannot be—they pass away;
> Other themes demand thy lay—
> Thou art no more a child."'

'I SAY, Ernest, old chap, when is that wonderful toilet of yours going to be finished? Harry, as he spoke, was standing at an open window in Ernest M'Mahon's bedroom. 'You know, old chum,' Harry continued, 'I promised to be at the old Manor in the early afternoon, and now we won't be there an hour before the guests arrive.

'You are right, lad,' answered Ernest, as he gave the finishing touch to his hair.

Then passing his hands through water, he wiped them briskly, standing before the glass as he did so, put the towel on the rail, and with a parting glance at his handsome face reflected in the mirror, took up his white kid gloves, saying, 'Now, Harry, I am ready, let us be off.'

The evening was a soft balmy one, the boys walked briskly and Grey Manor was soon reached. They did not go into the old Manor at all, they went straight to the garden, as Ernest wished to see the decorations Harry had spoken of. There they found Addie and Louie with the gardener giving the last touch to everything.

Harry was right, a fairy scene it would be later on, Ernest thought, when twilight would come, and all the magic lanterns lit. And the little fairy lamps of every colour suspended from the garlands of flowers, how pretty they would shine.

Even now, though twilight had not crept in, the old garden had a look of fairyland about it, where one might get lost through

a maze of flowers and magic lanterns. Then the old Manor peeping through it all, like an enchanted castle, where a sleeping beauty might be found, as in the fairy tale of old.

So Ernest thought anyhow, as he stood in a half dreamy, pensive way, watching the merry work. For all was activity, no time was to be lost, if they wished their preparations to be finished before the arrival of the guests.

As Ernest stood musing thus, he saw sweet Addie tying up the last garland of flowers—white flowers they were, with no colour through them, except some dark green leaves. The girl was already dressed for the evening in a simple white muslin, with a broad, white silk sash going round her waist, and knotted at the back. Very sweet and pretty she looked, her soft auburn hair falling loosely as usual over her shoulders—a perfect fairy queen, half hidden in her garland of white flowers. Ernest stood looking on till she had finished, then the spell was

broken, his fairy queen jumped lightly from the garden seat that she had mounted to tie up her garland of flowers, and she came towards Ernest, saying gaily, 'There! the work is finished, and I must go indoors to be ready to receive all the little folk as they arrive. Mother wishes that I should preside to-night.'

'You, Addie! and why not Mrs Grey?'

'Oh, mother will look after the elder people,' explained the girl; 'but I am the children's hostess, so mother says. This is my farewell to childhood, Ernest,' continued Addie more seriously, 'for on my return from France in three years hence I shall be eighteen, and therefore no longer a child.'

Ernest answered not a word, for somehow he felt a kind of choking in his throat, and dared not speak.

'But,' put in Harry, who had overheard what his sister said, 'you shall be always our queen, Addie, always our sweet Queen Mab; won't she, Ernest?'

The latter blushed a deep crimson, and

Harry, not waiting for an answer, clattered on in his ready fashion.

'Oh, by the way, Addie, I told Ernest you were to be our fairy queen to-night, and the queen must choose a king. Who shall he be? Ernest, I guess. Am I right, Queen Mab? If so,' continued the boy, 'take Ernest by the hand, and I shall crown you both with roses.'

'That's just it,' put in Louie, clapping his hands, delighted with his brother's idea. 'Addie shall be queen, and Ernest king. Now the crowning shall be done in a snap,' continued the impetuous child, as he pulled down a garland of flowers, the white flowers Addie had put up a little while ago. He cut off what made two crowns, and Harry helping him, they tied them with a bit of white ribbon, which had been left lying on the grass after the making of the flower garlands. Then they laughingly bade the boy and girl sit on the garden seat, and when they had placed the crowns on their heads, they bade their royal highnesses go

and receive their little court, for it was time.

In that the children were right, it was time, and high time, too, for carriages could be heard rolling down the old avenue. Addie ran breathlessly in, losing her crown on the way in a very unqueenlike fashion, and leaving the three boys to amuse themselves as best they could without their fairy queen.

Ah! that children's dance at the old Manor, what a happy, long-remembered one it was! How the little folks did amuse themselves to be sure! First they had gay times in the garden at hide-and-seek and all sorts of merry games. Then twilight crept in, magic lanterns and fairy lamps were lit, and as the night was fine the children lingered out of doors yet a little while.

Then the call was given, and they had to go in, but from the windows of the large, old-fashioned dancing-hall they could see the magic lanterns shining through the trees, and the fairy lamps

lighting up all with their mystic-coloured lights, giving the old garden a weird, strange look, and making it, to the children's eyes, a perfect fairyland.

Then dancing began, and little feet tripped right merrily, and little hearts beat gladly, and little folks enjoyed themselves. Addie was the gayest of the gay, going hither and thither, making everyone, after her own sweet fashion, happy and at home, and little Nina danced the whole night through, like the fairy elf she was. Even quaint little Nan was merry and enjoyed herself, albeit in a strange, old-fashioned, quiet, sly little way of her own. Thus the hours flew by. At midnight good-nights were to be said, for the dance was but a 'Cinderella' one, and at the magic midnight hour the little ones, like the Cinderella of old, would have to betake themselves to their homes. It wanted but one hour of that time now, for eleven o'clock had just struck by the old grandfather's clock in the entrance hall.

Helen Plunkett, heated after dancing,

sat by one of the windows, and opening it a little, the cool night air came rushing in, fanning her flushed cheeks. For a moment the girl was alone, but soon a tall giant figure was towering at her side.

'Miss Plunkett, I fear you shall catch cold; allow me to close the window, the draught is too much, and you are heated.'

'Thank you, Captain Fitzpatrick, there is no danger,' answered the girl in her haughty, insolent way, 'and I know,' she added, 'how to take care of myself.'

But Hugh Fitzpatrick was not one to be easily brushed aside, and for answer he only said, in his quiet yet firm way,—

'Nay, Miss Helen, please let me do it,' and with no further ceremony he shut the window, drew the curtains, and then sat down on a chair near Helen, saying in his calm way, 'Forgive me for my apparent rudeness, Miss Helen, but I could not see you so exposed; nothing is so imprudent as to open windows and sit in draughts when one is heated; and

had I listened to you,' he continued, still in the same calm way, 'you would surely have caught cold, and who knows what the consequence might have been,' he added gravely.

Helen tossed her head. 'A fig for the consequence, Captain Hugh, and even if I caught cold, what then? Nobody would care, and I don't know if I would care myself.'

Helen spoke after her usual reckless fashion, and besides, just now, she was out of sorts with herself and everybody else, for Hugh was just after having his own way, and made her look, even in her own eyes, ridiculous.

'Nay, Miss Helen,' he answered, 'somebody would care, and care very much too.' Hugh seemed to say the words meaningly.

The girl for a moment raised her eyes to his, and looked him full in the face. Then a bright blush came to her cheeks, and a glad look to her eyes, but she lowered them before Hugh could see the love light, and tossing her head after her

old fashion, answered, 'Somebody indeed! I should like to know who that somebody is. Father perhaps, or Perry—yes, they would be sorry,' added the girl, softly, 'but as for the others,' continued the spoiled beauty, 'they would fret as much about me as I would fret about them, for I don't care a fig for the rest of the world, no, not even a Jack straw!'

Hugh smiled. 'A poor compliment for me, Miss Helen, and for all your admirers.'

'Oh! a fig for my admirers. Sometimes I wish they were all in Jericho, though I must own that now and again they amuse me, and help me to pass the time, and my time, Captain Hugh,' continued Helen, with a weary yawn, 'is such a dull time sometimes.'

'Is it, Miss Helen. What makes it so dull?'

'Oh, I don't know; well, perhaps it is this,—you see, Captain Hugh, I have no aim, nothing particular to do, and I find life so often a bore, so dull sometimes,

that I feel half inclined to join a gipsy tribe, or something of that sort, anything for a change.'

As the girl spoke Hugh looked at her in a serious, thoughtful kind of way, but seeing it would be impossible to carry on the conversation without being heard by the merry crowd around them, Hugh asked Helen to join in the dance, which offer the girl accepted, not warmly, or as if she cared, but, on the contrary, in a proud, haughty way, as if she were conferring a great compliment upon her cavalier.

Hugh, who had known the wilful beauty from childhood, never paid much heed to her whims, for he was always able in his calm way to assert his authority over the 'spoiled child of fashion,' as he sometimes playfully called her. Up to this he had no fear for the future, he would win the wayward girl, and model her after his own fashion yet, he told himself. But to-night that spoiled child of fashion had put a great fear in his heart. All would

not be smooth sailing he feared. The spoiled child was growing into a spoiled, beautiful woman, with no aim, as she declared herself, in life, no aim but to worry her own poor little worldly heart, and break by the score those of her admirers, break them, and wreck their lives as lightly, and with as little thought, as a mischievous child might her toys or gather flowers for pastime, gather them in wantonness, just to throw them away.

Hugh knew all this, he knew Helen's faulty character, and yet he loved her—loved her with a love that only comes once in a lifetime. He had known her from her childhood, her very whims had a charm for him; that she was spoiled and worldly he knew right well, but he had always hoped that as she grew to womanhood she would develop better qualities. He believed her heart was sound; her devotion to her brother Perry made him think so.

Then his position was a good one—a captain in the army. Helen would like

the gay military life, he thought, and she would surely not refuse him; it would be as brilliant a match as she could expect, for the Plunketts, though fashionable people, lived up to their means, and Helen's fortune would be a small one.

Then with all her admirers Hugh knew of none better off than himself. His star was a lucky one, for his godfather, a rich old bachelor, had, when dying, left all his property to Hugh, hence Hugh's wealth, for Dr Fitzpatrick, with his large family and small income, could ill afford to spend much money on any of his boys—even Tim, to make a doctor of him, would have been a great strain on the father, only Hugh gave a helping hand, and so he did for each as they grew up. Kept his sisters at boarding convent schools. Paid for private lessons, and so on. A good son was Hugh, and a favourite with everyone. He had been away in England with his regiment, and was only home now on his holidays, but for the present he was stationed in Dublin, and

expected to be able to take a run down South now and again to see his friends, and perhaps also look after the fair Helen and her admirers.

Still he had trust in the girl. He believed that she always showed the worst side of her character, and that her heart was true and sound to the core. Yet to-night had put him thinking, and when the good-nights were saying in the hall, and little folks, now a bit sleepy and tired after their merry prancing, were saying farewell, Hugh, taking Helen's hand in good-bye, said, 'Miss Helen, may I call on you to-morrow, and if so, what hour shall I find you at home?'

'That I can't say,' answered the girl, carelessly. 'Perhaps five,' she added, 'might be your best hour, for I shall give Perry a drive in the country if the day is fine.'

'Then you may expect me at five, Miss Helen; and please tell Perry that his old friend, Hugh Fitzpatrick, will take a cup of tea with him to-morrow afternoon.'

Then he escorted her to her carriage,

together with her parents and little brothers, and for his pains got a stately bow from Helen. After which Hugh Fitzpatrick got into his own and drove off at a good pace. 'Twas a long drive to the city by the Lee, but somehow to Hugh it never seemed so short, so occupied was he, so busy had been his thoughts about that spoiled child of fashion.

CHAPTER V

A SPOILED CHILD OF FASHION

'Mine own sweet sister, dear, would be to me
The blessing to behold the sparkling sea ;
The flowers—the sweet sky—and the oak tree tall,
This would be sweet to me,
Yet one kind word from thee,
One touch of thy dear hand, were worth them all.'

'You enjoyed yourself last evening, Nellie, better than you expected, and gave Tim two dances instead of one!'

'Yes, better than I expected, Perry, but that's not saying much. By the way, Hugh Fitzpatrick is to call in this afternoon ; he will be here for our five o' clock tea, and desired me to tell you so.'

'Did he? I am so glad. Then we had better make an early start for the country, Helen, and be back before he calls.'

'Oh, we are sure to be,' answered the girl, carelessly, 'and even if we are not, his lordship can wait.'

'Nell, always the same old Nell, making naught of keeping others waiting on your ladyship. I wonder will it be always so?'

'Will what be always so, Perry?'

'I mean,' said the boy, hesitatingly, 'can you always act thus? Will your admirers be so many and so ardent, that you can treat them as you choose, and will you always have that wonderful charm that you seem to have now? Do you know, Nellie,' added the boy, thoughtfully, 'I sometimes think about your future, and it troubles me.'

Perry's words made the girl serious. Whilst he spoke she was at the window arranging flowers in a vase on a little table, but now she crossed over to where he sat, and sitting down on a low stool at his feet, took the boy's thin, wasted hand in hers, and said affectionately,—

'Perry, love, don't let my silliness trouble you. Have no fear for the future;

indeed I never think about it myself. Then why should it bother you? And now, brother mine,' added the girl, gaily, 'it's time to go for our drive. The fresh air will be good for both of us, and we can have a nice chat as we jog along. Polly won't have a heavy load, as we shall take no one but Stephen.'

Kissing Perry's poor little wasted hand, and calling Stephen—his boy attendant—to prepare him, Helen left the little boudoir, and went to her own room to dress. Thoughtfully and in a half dreamy way the girl got on her hat and jacket, and when they were on, instead of going down to join Perry, she stood at her window, looking out, as if she had forgotten all about the drive. Then, as if suddenly remembering, the girl took up her gloves hastily and ran downstairs.

Perry was already in the hall, seated in a chair, with his boy attendant at his side, waiting for her coming, and Polly was prancing at the door impatient to be off.

Carefully, and with almost a mother's

tenderness, the faithful Stephen helped the blind boy into the little trap. He was a strong lad was Stephen, a strong, somewhat coarse, heavy-looking chap, but with a heart of gold.

He now wrapped up his little master in many shawls, and put cushions at his back; indeed he took so long to arrange him, that Perry had to cry out for mercy, and declare he was too comfortable altogether, that Stephen was spoiling him. Then Helen took the reins, and Polly going off in a good trot, they soon gained the open country. On they went, on and on, Polly going at a mad pace now, but Helen never pulled rein until they had gained a wood far outside the outskirts of the city.

Then Helen pulled up, and giving Stephen a basket, bade him go pick some nuts for Perry and her to eat. But first Polly had to be tied securely to a tree, and Perry helped off the trap and made snug with shawls upon the grass. Then Stephen went about his nutting, and

Helen sat beside her brother, saying gaily,—

'Now for a good chat, my dear old, wise Perry. How pleasant,' continued the girl, 'it is to be here out in the sweet open country. Whilst we talk, the birds will be singing, and the fresh air blowing on our cheeks, and with it will come the smell of the sweet wild flowers. Ah! Perry, it is nice to be here. And now,' added the girl, gaily, 'what shall our chat be about?'

'Anything you like, Nell; but did I tell you Tim was in this morning; you were still abed when he came.'

'So early?'

'Not so early, Nellie; you know you slept it out to-day. You were tired, I suppose, after last night.'

'And what news had Tim?'

'Oh! a lot of news, Nell—a bag of news, and all about Grey Manor. Tim told me,' continued the boy, gaily, 'that it was a right jolly night. Everyone it seemed to him had put on their best

war paint and best humour; that afternoon tea was served in the garden midst magic lanterns and fairy bowers; that later on a sumptuous supper was served in the big, old dining-hall, the table of which was almost breaking under its heavy weight of massive silver, rich flowers, and great dishes, not to talk of sweets and cakes, and fruit and merry crackers, and he knew not what besides.'

'Then to see the little folks how they did justice to the good things, why, it would do one good, even if you got nothing yourself, but all the same it were better to have a share in the feast, and he, Tim, did ample justice to it, looking on, and admiring at the same time the fair bevy of girls at every side. That Addie Grey looked sweetly pretty in her simple white dress, so pretty, that he felt half inclined to fall in love with her, but thought it wiser not, as she was going away so soon. That little Nannie O'Connor is a wonderful musician, and played some charming little scraps of her

own composition. That Nina M'Mahon, and Louie Grey danced a hornpipe and jig in first-class style, and other step dances besides. That our two little brothers sat very boobish in a corner, and could not be got to dance at all. That mother was very angry at their backward manners, and declared she would never bring them out again.'

Here Perry stopped for want of breath, and Helen said mockingly,—

'Nothing more, Perry?'

'Oh, yes, Nell; only give me time. It's now I am coming to the interesting part. That the old Manor was gorgeously done up, and after the same fashion as the garden. That the whole place had a regal look about it, such as the old palaces might have had in days gone by, when the ancient kings of Ireland were holding their court, and preparing for a great war, or the royal marriage of one of their princes or princesses. That the fairest of the fair at the old Manor was Helen Plunkett, so lovely, oh! so lovely; indeed

her beauty was marvellous, it haunted one even in their dreams. That he, Tim, wished he had never seen her, for though she is beautiful—beautiful as the morning star—still she is very, very saucy, indeed insolent sometimes, and put a fellow's heart aching with as little thought and as little concern as if hearts were made of stone. He, Tim, knew it was not all her fault. She had been spoiled in her bringing up, first by her stepmother, who, proud of the child's beauty, brought her about in society before she was in her teens. Then the girl was unwisely sent to a fashionable boarding school, where she became more worldly still. At sixteen she was brought home and launched into high society, spending a season in Dublin, where she attended Castle balls and other gay festivities, winning lots of admirers, but spoiling her heart. That he, Tim, had a great love for the girl, and hoped one day to make her his wife. That he would be a great and rising man yet, a man any woman might be proud of. That he

meant to work up to the top rank in his profession and make his name famous. That—'

'Stop, Perry, for pity's sake say no more. Why, Tim must be stark mad to talk such silly nonsense. He to make his name famous indeed. Yes, famous as a great gossiper and no more. Why I have no patience with the boy.'

'Nay, Nellie, dear, don't get angry, or you will spoil our chat,' said Perry, gently. 'You know, sister mine,' he continued, 'I told you Tim's gossip only to make you laugh. And yet,' added the boy, musingly, 'Tim says wise things after his own fashion, and what he said to-day, Nell, put me thinking, thinking about—'

'About what, Perry?'

'Well, about you, Nell. If,' added the boy, eagerly, 'I ask you a question, will you promise me to answer it honestly?'

'Perry, I shall promise nothing without knowing first What do you wish to ask?'

'Well, 'tis only this,' answered the boy,

half reluctantly. 'If Captain Hugh asked you to be his wife, would you accept him? Do you like him well enough to marry him?'

If Perry could have seen the vivid colour that crimsoned the girl's fair face as he asked the question, he would have had no doubt but that she liked Hugh, liked him quite well enough to marry him. The question took her by surprise, and for a moment she did not answer, then she said quietly,—

'But why Hugh Fitzpatrick above all others, Perry?'

'Because I like him best, Nellie, and I fancy he has a liking for you. Tim says so anyhow. Helen, my own sweet sister,' continued the boy, earnestly, 'I should so like to see you happily done for, with a home of your own, and blessed with a kind, thoughtful husband such as Hugh would make. Besides, you know, Nellie, you have no one to look after you. Father is too busy, and mother too worldly, and it would be a great comfort, a great consola-

tion to me before I go to see my darling sister happily wedded.'

'Before you go, Perry!' exclaimed Helen in alarm. 'What do you mean? You are not weaker than usual?'

'Nay, Nellie, not weaker; but you know how frail my health is at the best of times, and one can never tell when the end may come. But with you done for, my mind would be at peace, my only wish gratified.'

'Dear old Perry, one would think that little head of yours had seen eighty winters, you talk so wisely.'

'So Father Gerald always said,' answered the boy, gravely. 'You remember him, Helen?'

'Father Gerald? To be sure I do, and how you both tried to convert me,' answered the girl, laughingly. 'The only wonder was, Perry, that he did not bring you off to Africa, you were so attached to him during his short stay in town.'

'And I should so like to have gone, Nellie, had I been strong like other boys.

Oh! it would be grand to be a missionary priest,' continued the boy, clasping his hands. 'Father Gerald told me such beautiful things, and how difficult their task is out there. Such a difficult, but such a glorious work, winning souls for God. And then he told me besides many things about my religion that I never knew before,—for we had been sadly brought up, Nell, and Father Gerald spoke of saints, and how they lived, and suffered and died, and he went through all the Old and New Testament. Such beautiful things in both, Nell, I could never tire of either, and often I get Stephen to read them for me still. Ah! sister mine, 'twas a pity you missed Father Gerald's instructions, they were so amusing and so instructive; but you remember you never would come in to my little boudoir when Father Gerald was there.'

'Not likely, Perry; such serious talk is not at all in my line.'

'I know that, Nellie, dear, and I am sorry, for I would wish 'twere otherwise;

but to resume our conversation about Hugh Fitzpatrick, what do you say?'

'That I shall promise nothing. First I don't wish to leave you, Perry, and I want my liberty yet awhile. Secondly, I am going after Christmas to Dublin. Mother has promised it, and perhaps I shall finish the season in London with mother's married sister. I am ambitious, Perry, naturally ambitious,' continued the girl, seriously. 'I like wealth and rich belongings, and grand surroundings with no money cares. These I cannot expect with my small fortune, but my beauty may win them, indeed perhaps it has already done so. Do you know,' added the girl, gaily, 'what the morning post brought me?'

'I am sure I can't tell, Nellie.'

'A letter, you stupid boy.'

'Ah! to be sure, Nell; but from whom?'

'That is a secret, Perry, but I shall tell you. From Herbert Langley, an English gentleman. I met him at the Castle last year. He is the son and

heir-apparent of Sir Herbert Langley, and they have splendid property, I believe, in Wales.'

'But what did he write about, Nellie?'

'Little curious, you want to know all. Well, he was greatly taken with my beauty last year, so he says anyhow, and wishes to transplant his "beautiful Irish flower," as he calls me, in English soil, but his father's consent must be obtained, and that's not got as yet. Now Herbert,' continued the girl, in the same gay tones, 'is looking forward to the pleasure of meeting me again at the Castle this winter, so I must not disappoint him.'

Perry sighed, and said nothing. Somehow, Helen's conquest did not elate him in the least. To Perry's thinking, amongst all Helen's admirers, there was not one so true, so brave, so worthy of a woman's love and a woman's heart, as honest Hugh Fitzpatrick.

'Helen, it's time to go home; it's chilly.'

Again was Perry wrapped up as before by his faithful Stephen, and again did Helen take the reins, and tell Polly to trot on, but this time the word was homewards. And home Polly trotted in a right gay little fashion, as if she too had got quite enough of outdoor airing for that day, and was wishing to be in her snug little stall.

Perry was right, the evening had turned chilly, not at all like the evening of the day before, which was a soft balmy one. When they got home, Stephen seeing how cold and tired his little master looked, put fires in the little boudoir and sitting-room.

When Helen came down a little later on, after she had changed her dress for a pretty evening one, she found Perry fast asleep in his big arm-chair by the fire. Not wishing to disturb him, she went softly into his little sitting-room, and taking a chair, sat before the bright fire, looking thoughtfully into its blaze. The girl was still looking into the fire's

ruddy light in a musing, dreamy way when Hugh Fitzpatrick was announced.

Now Helen was usually in Perry's boudoir at five, for she always took afternoon tea with her brother, and it was no unusual thing for Perry's friends to call in at that hour and have a chat and cup of tea with him, Helen presiding at the little tea-table.

Mrs Plunkett never received nor never was 'at home' to visitors. If she were, it should be after a gorgeous fashion, but as she was too lazy to exert herself so far, she found it easier not to be 'at home' at all. And except an odd formal visit to friends on their 'at home' days, society in the South saw little of her; but as a rule she spent a month or two in Dublin every year, for her father's family had always attended the Castle balls, and Mrs Plunkett after her marriage still continued to do so.

The little tea-tray had been laid when Helen entered, and the kettle

hissing on the hob, but that was in the little boudoir where Perry was fast asleep, and as Helen did not wish he should be disturbed if callers came, she changed the tea-tray and kettle from the little boudoir to the sitting-room, and then sat down before the fire, and was still looking into its ruddy light when Hugh Fitzpatrick was announced.

Helen received him in her most distant fashion, and as she gave him her hand she scarcely raised her eyes from the glowing embers. But Hugh did not pretend to notice, and dropped into an easy-chair, remarking he was very tired and cold.

'I have been out for a long ride,' he explained, 'and have but just returned. I came on straight, Miss Helen, as I promised to be here at five. But where is Perry?'

'There yonder,' and as Helen spoke she pointed to the boudoir, through the open door of which they could see

the blind boy sleeping calmly in his big arm-chair by the fire. 'Will you have a cup of tea, captain?'

'Well, I don't object, Miss Helen.'

The girl took the little silver tea-pot, put some tea into it from a canister close by, and then poured the boiling water on. In a few minutes it was ready, and after handing a cup of tea to Hugh, poured out one for herself.

'Miss Helen, your tea is delicious,' remarked Hugh. 'What a capital little housekeeper you are,' he continued gaily. ''Tis a pity Perry can't join us; but perhaps 'tis best so,' he added gravely, 'for I wish to have a serious talk with you, Miss Helen.'

For answer the girl took the poker and rattled the fire until its bright embers flew up the chimney, then the reflection of its ruddy glow fell on the girl's lovely face, lighting it up, and making her, in Hugh's eyes anyhow, marvellously beautiful. How charming she looked as she stood there before the

fire, how queenlike, with her tall figure, her classic features, grace and girlish beauty in every movement. Ah! how lovely, how marvellously beautiful!

'Miss Helen, as I said,' continued Hugh after a moment's silence, 'I wish to have a serious talk with you, and I hope you won't object.'

As he spoke, Helen dropped languidly into her seat, remarking, 'Say what you wish, captain, but for mercy's sake don't lecture.'

Then the girl began to sip her tea with quite an unconcerned air, as if anything Hugh would say could not be of interest to her.

Hugh stood up, and putting away his cup on the mantelpiece said smilingly, 'Nay, Miss Helen, my talk this evening won't be a lecture, that I promise you.' Then crossing to where the girl sat, he stood before her and continued gravely, 'Miss Helen, my leave will be up in a few days, and I shall then rejoin my regiment. Perhaps after a little time we shall be

ordered abroad, so if I did not speak now I might have no other opportunity for a long time. What I am going to offer, believe me, I would never offer were I a poor man, or even a comparatively rich one. If such were the case I would leave you without a word, without a token of my great love—not the love of a week or a day, but that of a lifetime. For I have loved you since you were a child, Helen, loved you, and love you as a man only loves once in his life, and I now lay that great love at your feet. Will you accept it?'

Hugh paused as if for an answer, but none came. Whilst he was speaking, the girl had put away her cup on the little table beside her, and with clasped hands sat looking into the fire. Seeing that the girl listened as if she heard not, and all the while kept looking into the glowing embers as if she saw some pictures there, Hugh, after a moment's silence, continued,—

'I am a rich man, Helen; my income

is a large one. All that wealth and luxury can buy you shall have. My love is strong and deep, but I trust unselfish, for, as I said already, if I were only comparatively rich, I would never offer you my heart and hand. I would go away without a sign, and you would never know how Hugh Fitzpatrick loved you. Can't you, won't you believe me, and trust me with your happiness?'

Ah! surely she could and ought. That brave, honest soldier heart merited a girl's love and trust, and should not be treated lightly. But still the girl answered not, and Hugh, growing impatient at her silence, paced for a few moments rapidly up and down the room, then he came again and stood before her.

'Helen, it must be that you don't love me; but in any case I think I am entitled to an answer.'

'Not love him! Oh! if Hugh had only known, if he had only seen the conflict that was going on in that little worldly heart. The war between love and

ambition. The yearning to accept the brave soldier heart that was offered, but also the strong desire for freedom yet awhile. And then the girl's foolish ambitious yearnings after mighty grandeur, the confidence in her winning powers and marvellous beauty. Ambition whispering it would be folly to accept Hugh, richer men, and titled men, men with long handles to their names might yet be won. Thus ambition whispered, and alas! with the poor child of fashion, ambition gained the day, and when Hugh stood before her, declaring she must not love him, but that in any case he was entitled to an answer, the girl tossed her head proudly back, and said coldly,—

'You are right, Captain Hugh, and an answer you shall have. I thank you for the great honour you have paid me; but I don't mean to part with my liberty, I won't be the promised wife of any man yet awhile. Who knows,' added the spoiled beauty, 'what the future has in store.'

'Ah! who indeed, Helen, who knows; but for me I fear it has only a broken heart, and broken prospects,' answered the young man, bitterly. 'I had hoped,' he went on in a low, subdued, yet earnest way, 'nay, I had almost believed, Helen, sometimes by a softening of your face, sometimes by your smile, sometimes by a brightening of your eyes, that you loved me, and to think I was deceived! Oh! say it is not so, Helen, say you love me and will be my wife?'

He took her hand in both of his as he spoke, and had Helen not received that letter from Herbert Langley, and were her poor worldly heart not quite so choked up with ambition, she would have relented, and thrown titles and mighty grandeur to the wind for that brave, strong honest heart which loved her so well, but as it was she drew her hand from Hugh's and said coldly,—

'Captain Hugh, 'tis useless to continue. You must take your refusal, for I have ambitious dreams for the future; but if my

dreams,' added the girl, coolly, 'don't come to pass, perhaps I shall have you.'

'And what may those dreams be?' asked Hugh in a suppressed tone, for her words had roused his anger.

'Oh! no idle daydreams,' answered the spoiled beauty, 'but real matter-of-fact ones, as I could prove by the letter I got this morning, which is almost a proposal, and the writer is the son and heir of Sir Herbert Langley, a rich old baronet, and his son Herbert is an only child.'

'Do you love this young man, Helen?'

Again Helen poked the fire, and again its ruddy blaze lit up the girl's beautiful face as she answered hastily and somewhat pettishly,—

'Love is not necessary where there is title and wealth. How very much behind the times you are, Captain Hugh.'

'Perhaps I am, and behind the times also, Helen, when I tell you that you have wrecked my life, and I only hope

your sordid ambition won't bring you sorrow. Farewell, Helen Plunkett.'

He bowed before her as he spoke, and then he left her, his heart broken and his life a blank, and she, poor foolish girl, with her pride and her ambition, would not call him back and acknowledge that she loved him, but let him go on his lonely way without a word of comfort. And so two lives were wrecked, and two hearts broken, all because the heart of this poor child of fashion was choked up with ambition.

'Are you there, Nellie? I think I have been sleeping,'

'Yes, Perry, love, I am here; and you have been sleeping, sleeping a long time.'

'And Hugh, did he come?'

'Yes, he came and went, Perry.'

'Gone away? It can't be so. Why did you not call me, Nellie?'

'Well, you were sleeping so calmly, I did not wish to disturb you, Perry; and, besides, even in your sleep, you looked tired.'

'But you could have called me, Nellie, before Hugh went away.'

'Oh! Captain Hugh left rather abruptly,' answered the girl, with some hesitation.

'Then you quarrelled, Nellie; I am sure you did. What could it be about? There, I have guessed it. He proposed, and—and you refused him, Nell. Oh! say it's not true,' added the boy, eagerly, 'say it's not true?'

'Dear little worrying Perry, with your head of eighty winters, it is true. Why should I accept Hugh Fitzpatrick when richer wooers are in the field, and titled ones too?'

'Oh, Nellie, Nellie, why did you do it? How could you do it?' that was all poor Perry said, then he covered his face with his poor wasted hands, and his whole little fragile frame shook with emotion. Each sob as it came from his little heart cut like a knife through Helen's heart. 'Twas more than the girl could bear, so she said hastily, and in a choking voice,—

'Perry, I shall send Stephen to you, for I am tired and have a headache. Good-night.'

'Why did you do it? How could you do it?' The words rang in the girl's ears long after everyone in that old house except herself was asleep, for sleep she could not. Oh! it was a weary night. The wind came moaning down the chimney; it moaned through the chinks in the door, through the splits in the shutters, through the slits in the window; it moaned everywhere, Helen thought; it rattled the old windows as it never rattled them before; it came shrieking up the stairs and through the keyhole. And then the rain came down in torrents, and went plash, plash against the window panes. Oh! it was a windy and a rainy night, and yet through all that shrieking and moaning and splashing, through all that wild storm of wind and rain, Perry's words, during that weary night, kept ever ringing in the girl's ears. 'Why did you do it? How could you do?'

Next morning Perry had a few lines from Hugh, saying he was obliged to join his regiment and bidding him farewell.

As Helen read the short epistle for her brother, her voice trembled. And all through that day an aching was in the girl's heart. Ah! it was a sad and a weary day, the most miserable Helen had ever spent, but still she wavered not, but went on in her wilful, reckless way, choking up as best she could the aching and the regret that would come at times. An aching and a regret that could not be hushed, but came and went as it willed, spoiling her pleasures, and leaving a void in her poor heart. An aching and a regret that would not be gainsayed, that marred her sweet young life, and still the girl heeded not, listened not to her better self, all was sacrificed at ambition's shrine. Poor wayward child of fashion, poor reckless Helen!

CHAPTER VI

A LITTLE STORY-TELLER

'I loved her from my boyhood—she to me was a fair city of the heart.'

'AUNT SARAH, why didn't you ever marry?'

The little heiress of Oakland Hall was perched on a high stool at her aunt's side. The latter was busy sewing, and Nannie was supposed to be also, for she had a piece of embroidery in her hands, but Ponto at her feet came in for far more attention from the little heiress of Oakland Hall than did her needlework.

She had grown somewhat since we first made her acquaintance two years ago, but still the same fragile, delicate-looking child, with a shadowy look about her. Of late her father and aunt were seriously con-

cerned regarding her health. The old family doctor was consulted. He declared there was nothing radically wrong, that the child only wanted change of scene, and some little companions to play with.

Edith M'Mahon hearing this, wrote to Aunt Sarah inviting Nannie to pass the summer months at Crag Castle. The squire and Aunt Sarah gladly consented. So Nannie, to her great delight, was leaving next day for Nina's home.

She had two months' vacation before her, two bright, sunny months Nannie hoped they would be, and already Ponto was promised many gay rambles with Nina and herself through the sunny glens and green fields of little Sunbeam's home.

Now when Nannie asked her aunt the somewhat impertinent question as to why she never married, Aunt Sarah did not pretend to hear, and only plied her needle the faster, but Miss Nan was too spoiled to be put off like that, so she repeated

the question. Aunt Sarah smiled at the little face looking up at her so eagerly, and answered in an amused tone,—

'Because, Miss Nan, I did not choose; but what put such a question into your little head to-day?'

'Oh! I often wondered, aunty, why you never married,' answered the child, 'and sometimes thought 'twas all on my account, as I would have no one to take care of me if you were gone; but yesterday I heard old Sam saying to the cook that you were very handsome when you were young, and when he was butler here in grandfather's time there was not a more dashing or finer-looking girl in the whole country, but some love affair spoiled your life, and that is why you are an old maid.'

A faint flush came into Aunt Sarah's face, and for a moment she looked annoyed, but that look quickly passed away, and back came the old calm, earnest look that Nannie loved so well.

'What a gossiper old Sam is to be

sure, Nan. Well, child,' continued Aunt Sarah, calmly, 'as you know so much, I shall tell you all. I was, I suppose, as Sam says, a fine, dashing-looking girl, and as my father had the name of being very rich wooers were plenty; but I was what they call a racy girl, I loved horses, and hunting was my forte, so little heed gave I to lovers. But one hunting season—I remember it as if it were only yesterday — when I was twenty-three, amongst the many visitors staying in this old Hall was an English gentleman, his father was an old chum of your grandfather's, and he had invited the son for some weeks during the hunting season.

'Mark Leadly pleased me well; his tastes were exactly my tastes; he had never hunted in Ireland before, and he seemed to enjoy it, and often and many were the jolly hunting days we had together. I got to like him very much, and as weeks flew by my liking grew into love. His attentions were very

marked, and I could not doubt but my love was returned. On the eve of his departure he proposed and I joyfully accepted; then he went to ask father, who accepted also, but told him at the same time that the estate was mortgaged, and my fortune could not be paid in full until his son—your father—a boy at the time, would marry.

'On hearing this, Mark Leadly said that his proposal was to be considered as naught; that no promise would do; he should have the ready money, and so he went away and left me, his sordid, ambitious heart caring little for the broken one he left behind. Your father got married some six or seven years after to a wealthy young lady—your own sweet mother—who brought lots of money to this old Hall, but she died after giving you birth. So I took upon my shoulders the charge to look after the little heiress of Oakland Hall, and I grew to love my quaint little Nan as if she were my own child. Years flew by, I had

no wish to marry, and so my story ends.'

When Aunt Sarah ceased speaking, Nannie kept silence for a little while, then she said,—

'Aunty, when I am big I shall do as you did, I will never marry, but live on here with you and father. I shall have no lessons then, and you will let me do just as I like, won't you? We shall sew, and read, and talk, and have pleasant walks together, and visit the poor, and bring them good things. Oh! 'twill be a jolly time, that time, aunty.'

Aunt Sarah, as she looked at the pale, delicate child, wondered with a sigh would her quaint little Nan ever live to see that time. However, she answered playfully, 'So my little Nan is going to be an old maid? Then this old Hall shall have two old maids instead of one, and I think that will be too many.'

'Not a bit, aunty, old maids are dear, lovable old things, if they are all like you, and they can't be too plenty. And

you are a dear old aunty,' continued the child, putting her arms round her Aunt Sarah's neck, 'to tell me such a nice story, and I thank you very much, and love you dearly.'

Then, with a kiss and a hug, little Nan danced off with Ponto for a gay run in the garden.

. . . . . .

How quickly the time flew by! Nannie could scarcely believe that in another week her visit to Crag Castle would be at an end. It had been a very pleasant one, and the little heiress of Oakland Hall had grown stronger and more healthy, and perhaps not quite so quaint in her ways—yet quaint she was still, as Ernest often told her. A tease was Ernest, a great tease, Nannie tells herself, as she dresses for an outdoor excursion on a bright August forenoon. All were going to a wood about a mile away, and were to bring their luncheon with them. There they would meet Harry and Louie Grey, and after luncheon were to climb

a mountain hard by, from the top of which there was a splendid view of the whole country round. Then the day was to finish by all returning to Crag Castle and spending the afternoon together.

So it was arranged, and right merrily he children set out on their glad excursion, but a disappointment came in the shape of Harry not turning up, for Louie came alone accompanied by his tutor. Harry, Mr Fox said, was in disgrace, and kept indoors that day by his father. Of late that often happened, for the boy was more unruly and unmanageable than ever, and after the summer holidays was to be packed off to college.

Harry's absence threw a damp on the children's excursion. However, Louie was in high glee, and did his best to coax Nina into better humour, but Miss Nina only pouted, and declared it was a shame to punish Harry so. With her warm, affectionate little heart, to be in disgrace or punishment was enough to win the child's sympathy, and Harry, with all his wild

doings and constant punishments, had already gained Nina's. The child always took his part, and with a child's impulsive thoughtlessness and want of reason she had come to look upon Harry as ill used by all, and with no friend but herself to defend him.

When the little party gained the top of the mountain, Mr Fox proposed that they should take a rest, so the children squatted everywhere, and Master Louie perched himself on a high, rocky stone which jutted out from the side of the mountain.

'Now, Nina,' said the boy, 'I can imagine I am that big giant of old who lived in the fastness of this mountain, and often, I daresay, came and sat where I am sitting now. You know there is a cave under this rock, Nina,' continued Louie, gravely. 'Well, that cave was the giant's home. He lived there.'

'But what did he eat, Louie?'

'Oh, no fear the giant was backward in that line, Sunbeam, for in olden times,

you know, there were lots of wild animals in Ireland, and the wolf dog to this day forms part of the Irish shield—a proof that there were wolves—so of course the giant slaughtered them by the hundred, and then stored them by till he wanted them.'

'By the hundred, Louie?'

'Certainly, Nina; a giant would surely eat a dozen at one meal, and even with a dozen it strikes me he would not have enough.'

Little Nina's eyes were full of wonder as she listened to Louie. He was only a scrap, to be sure, like herself, was Louie, but he looked really wise in little Sunbeam's eyes, as he sat perched up on his high rock, with Nina sitting on the moss beneath.

'Tell me more about that big giant, Louie?'

'Well, Sunbeam, I shall tell you a pretty story about him. Nurse Winters told it to me not very long ago.'

'And begin, Louie, by saying "Once upon a time."'

'Certainly, Nina. Well, once upon a time, and a very good time it was, there lived long ago, and long ago it was, a tremendous giant, Ireland's greatest giant, and that is saying very much, for Erin was celebrated for its giants. This giant's name was Finn MacCoul. He lived in a beautiful part of Ireland, upon the top of a mountain. On that mountain, Nina, there was a rock, and in that rock a great big cave. That was the giant's home.

'Now this big giant lived very happily all by himself for a long time, but one day he took it into his head to marry, so he came down from his big mountain, and walked about the country proclaiming everywhere that he wished to find a wife. And what do you think! Old women and young women, handsome girls and fine ladies, all wished to be the favoured one—the giant's wife. Now, even a giant can't please everybody; he could not marry them all, he only wanted one, and to choose one without making the others very wrath against him, that was the

question. But the giant was as wise as he was big, so he arranged that on the following morning he was to sit on the top of the very rock that I am sitting now, and all Ireland's fair daughters were to assemble in the valley at the foot of the mountain. Then when all were ready to start, a friend of his—another giant by the way—was to drop a white handkerchief. That was the signal for the ladies to start. They were to run up the mountain, and whoever would gain the top first, and this rock, she was to be his wife.

'Well, next morning Finn MacCoul came and sat here, where I am sitting now, Nina. It was still early, but already girls were pouring into the valley from all parts of Ireland. Some were very handsome, and more were beautiful, but more again were old and ugly, and the giant trembled lest the ugly ones should win. But "Bah!" he said, "it's not possible; the ugly ones are all old, and old legs are not so good to run as young legs."

'Now amongst all the women assembled

were three young girls remarkably beautiful, and one old hag remarkably ugly. This old hag, Graunia, had dreadful teeth; two especially were so long that they measured two feet, and, worse still, she walked with the help of a crutch. All mocked at the old lady, and laughed at the notion of such an ugly hag aspiring to be the wife of such a handsome giant, especially the three beautiful girls, they laughed the heartiest of all.

'"Oh, you may all laugh, my dearies," answered old Graunia, "but I can tell you, fair and go easy goes far in the day." At last the white handkerchief was dropped, and all started. Off bounded the young ones like wild deer, but the fat and heavy ones amongst them were soon left behind, and some of the older ones, who were thinner and lighter of foot, passed them in the race, and kept well to the front.

'At first the old hag was last—they all seemed to run away from her—but it was not for very long. Soon she passed a dozen

or two who were tired out, and had to sit down for want of breath. Old Graunia when passing them said, "There you are, my lasses, fair and go easy goes far in the day." A little later on she passed another group, who, running too fast, had sprained their ankles, or got their feet into bog-holes, or some other such mishaps. The old lady passed them all with the same words, "There you are, my lassies, fair and go easy goes far in the day," and so the old dame passed them one by one. All were passed now except the three beautiful girls, who still kept at a pretty good pace, though even they began to lag, as they were by this time in a dreadful heat, for the morning was a very warm one, and the sun shone brightly.

'Finn MacCoul from the top of this rock watched the race with keen interest, and now his heart failed within him, for he saw one of the beautiful girls fall down from exhaustion, and he could hear the old hag, as she passed her beautiful rival, saying calmly and yet triumphantly,

"Ah! you are there, lassie, fair and go easy goes far in the day." Now the other two were not far off from the rock; they had gained the top of the mountain, the heath grew in profusion, 'twas like a soft carpet under their weary feet, for they were quite tired out by this time and could scarcely run at all. However they kept on as best they could; but the heath, though very beautiful, covered many treacherous holes, and bump went one of their feet into one of them, the poor girl's leg was broken, she could go no farther.

'Now the giant, seeing this, trembled, and trembled so much, that the very rock shook and bent outwards as you see it now; but Finn MacCoul consoled himself by watching the last and most beautiful of all the girls, who came along now at a brisk pace, for she took courage, seeing she had no one to contend with now but old Graunia, who kept hobbling right merrily behind, and now the giant's heart throbbed and jumped so wildly with joy, that it jumped right into his mouth, for

the beautiful girl had only a little turn more to take, and then she would be at the rock ; but alas ! in taking that little turn —you see it yonder, Nina—she, tired out, and yet trying to go quick, sprained her ankle. The pain was too great, she had to sit down. Up came the old hag, and passed her with her mocking phrase, "Ah, you are there, lassie, fair and go easy goes far in the day."

'Now the old lady gained the rock, and Finn MacCoul, much as he disliked it, had to kiss her, and declare that she was to be his wife. The old hag gave him a hug, and such a warm hug, that Graunia's two front teeth went right deep into Finn MacCoul's chest, for they were, as you may remember, Nina, two feet long ; but though they made two big holes in his flesh, that, as he was a giant, was a trifle, and made no matter, for giants scorn such small things. But it made a lot of matter to have such an ugly old dame for a wife. However he kept his promise like the brave giant he was and married her. Now, ugly

as old Graunia was, she was the means of saving Finn MacCoul's life later on; but perhaps my story is too long to finish, Nina, I can tell it some other day.'

'Oh, no, Louie, not at all too long. See, the others are chatting, and Mr Fox looks still quite hot and tired, so please continue that lovely story about the giant and old Graunia.'

'Well, to please you, little Sunbeam, I shall finish it, and whilst I am telling it, Nina,' added the boy, with an air of importance, 'you can imagine I am the giant perched on my rock, and the great race up the mountain is just over, and it is you who have won, Nina, and you are to be my wife—eh, little Sunbeam, that would be nice, a giant's wife?'

'And must I fancy also, Louie, that I am old Graunia, with two big, long teeth?' asked the child, looking up at the boy through her cloud of golden curls.

'Oh, well, not exactly that, Nina,' answered Louie, for he did not half care for the notion of little Sunbeam to fancy

she was old Graunia. 'There,' added the boy, 'don't fancy anything at all, Nina, but I shall go on with my story. Well, little Sunbeam, you must know that though Finn MacCoul was the greatest and most formidable giant in all Ireland, there was one in Scotland that had a mighty great name, and this Scotch giant hearing of Finn MacCoul sent him a challenge to fight, which the Irish giant had to accept, though not without misgivings, for he feared the Scotch giant would win.

'However, being a wise man, he told his fears to his wife, and she, bidding him go to bed, said she would manage the rest herself. They were living now in a great big castle made of an immense stone that the giant had cut off a great rock. Along came the Scotch giant and knocked at the door, and though he did it as gently as he could, his knock shook the big stone castle, and Finn MacCoul trembled in his bed.

'"Is your husband at home?" demanded the Scotch giant, as he strode into the big hall.

'"He shall be in presently," answered the old dame; "and I have just been wishing for him," she continued, "for the north wind is blowing, and this castle is, as you see, facing north. Now my husband, when the wind blows from the north, just puts his shoulder to the corner of the kitchen, and turns the castle round about, thus facing it south. As it is very cold," continued old Graunia, "could I trouble you to do the same?"

'The Scotch giant strode into the kitchen, and looked up at the great stone walls. "Hum," he thought, "this Irish giant must be very strong." However, he put his shoulder to the corner, and turned the house facing south as the old dame had asked him.

'"Hum," thought poor Finn MacCoul, in his bed, "I am afraid I am done for, I never could do that."

'"What have you got here, my good dame?" demanded the Scotch giant, as he strode over towards the fire on which some bread was baking on a griddle. "Hum,

cakes, I declare, good dame, and I am hungry."

'"Then you shall have them and welcome," answered the old lady. "I was baking them for my husband," she explained, "but you can have half. Here," continued old Graunia, "taste my bread and see if it's not good," and as she spoke she handed him a tremendous cake, that she could scarcely lift, it was so heavy, but the giant took it as if it were only a feather's weight. "'Tis very hard, as you shall find," added the old lady, "for I always have to put a griddle into the middle of the bread for my husband, otherwise it would not be hard enough, his teeth are wonderful."

'"Hum, I should think so," thought the Scotch giant, but he ate the cake all the same, and cracked and swallowed the griddle as if it were a nut.

'"Oh! murder in Irish," thought Finn MacCoul, "that fellow has teeth as strong as all my body put together."

'"Who have you got yonder, dear dame,

in that big bed in the corner?" demanded the Scotch giant, as he pointed to where Finn MacCoul was lying with his head under the bedclothes.

'"'Tis only our baby," answered the old lady. "Come and put your finger in his mouth, and see what splendid teeth he has got already, teeth just like his dear father."

'The Scotch giant strode over, and, quite unsuspecting, put his finger into Finn MacCoul's mouth. Directly he did so, Finn chopped it off, and as it was the finger in which lay all the charm of the Scotch giant's strength, Finn MacCoul jumped out of bed, took his sword, and cut off the giant's head. Then rang all through Ireland the news of the wonderful battle between the rival giants, and how the Irish giant had proved the strongest, and had cut off the Scotch giant's head.

'That's the end of my story, Nina.'

'But you did not finish it right, Louie.'

'Well, "if they don't live happy, that we may, so put down the kettle and make the 'tay,'" as old Nurse Winters says.

There, it is finished now, anyhow, Sunbeam, so let us go play, or, better still, gather heath and make little brooms of it, to sweep out your dolls' houses.'

As he spoke, Louie came sliding down the rock, and he and Nina were about to start on the heath expedition, when Ernest called out, 'I say, Sunbeam, where are you two off to? We are going home.'

So the children had to give up their dolls' brooms for that day and turn homewards.

As they joined the group, Ernest said laughingly, 'You don't know what a pretty story you have lost, Nina—a nice story about two little French children. Mr Fox has been telling it to us, and also many interesting things about Addie.'

'Oh, I know it all by heart, for I read Addie's letter three times over this morning,' put in Louie, with his biggest air of importance. 'Come along, Nina,' he added, 'and I shall tell it to you.'

Hand in hand the children ran on before the others. 'Now, Sunbeam, we can

walk, we are out of hearing, so listen to my story; but first I must tell you that we had a very long letter from Addie this morning. She is at our aunt's castle in the country at present, and all my cousins are there, and many friends, so Addie says they have a gay time of it. Aunt's eldest son, Gilbert, is there also. Addie says he is the nicest of them all, and has promised to come over next year with aunt and uncle when Addie is coming home, so we shall have a gay month or two in the old Manor.'

'Then Addie is really coming next year, Louie? I am so glad; but perhaps she has grown to be a big, big, grand girl, and won't talk to me at all.'

'What nonsense, Nina; what a foolish little Sunbeam you are,' retorted the boy. 'As if,' added he, indignantly, 'our Addie could put on fine airs. Why father used to say before she went to France that his Addie was the sweetest flower in the old Manor, and so she shall be always. I am so glad,' continued the boy, lowering his

voice, 'that Addie is coming home next year, oh! so glad, Nina; but you never would guess why,' be added mysteriously.

'And won't you tell me, Louie?'

'Well, perhaps, Nina, though it's a great secret. However, little Sunbeam, as we never kept secrets from each other, I shall tell you. Well, it is this: Before Addie went away, she made me promise that I would try and bear with Harry, and put up with his teasing as best I could. That promise I have kept,' continued the boy, proudly, 'but at what a price! Sometimes, Nina, to keep my ready tongue from answering back, I would be obliged to shut my lips fast, and put my teeth on them, and sometimes I should press so hard, that the blood would come, but it mattered not, my promise was kept. Or again, at times I would put my hands to my ears, and run away, though I knew Harry was shouting "Coward" after me. Oh, it is hard, very hard, Nina, to restrain my hot

temper, for I have a dreadful one. However, I hope to grow out of it. Mother says I surely shall, if I pray and fight hard. And that I mean to do,' added the boy, resolutely, 'for a temper like mine often brings great misfortune and great misery in after life, so mother says.'

Nina had been listening on in wonder. Little Sunbeam, in her laughing, babyish innocence, never dreamt of after life at all, and though nearly the same age as Louie, still he, in her eyes, was very wise and serious, and as she looked up at him now through her golden mist, her big blue eyes were filled with innocent wonder and admiration at Louie's wisdom and forethought for the hereafter.

'How wise you are growing, Louie; you will soon be too wise to play with. Why, I never think at all,' added the child, naïvetely.

'Oh, you are only a little dot, Sunbeam, just a little speck of gold dust. See,' added Louie, with an air of importance, 'I am much taller than you, and to prove it the

boy stood on his toes, and held up his head as high as he could.

'But the story, Louie, there is a story.'

'Always craving stories, Nina, always, always. Why, I think you would sell me for a story. Would you, Sunbeam?'

'Perhaps,' answered little Nina, frankly, 'if,' she added, 'the story was very nice, and very long.'

'Then you don't merit I should tell you one,' answered the boy, hotly. 'You are a nice Sunbeam,' he continued, indignantly, 'to sell me for such a trifle.'

'Oh, but, Louie, I only said perhaps,' answered Nina; 'and,' she added coaxingly, 'do please tell me the story?'

'And if I do, Nina, you shall love me best of all. Of course, I don't mean better than your father and mother, or Ernest; but I shall come next on the list, won't I?"

'That I don't know,' answered Miss Nina, with a wise shake of her golden curls, 'for I think Harry is before you, and also my two favourite dolls—the one

with the punched nose, and the dolly with the broken back; they are unfortunate and therefore unhappy, and so is Harry, and that's why he goes first on the list with them.'

'Then, Nina, to be first favourite with you, one must have a punched nose, or in some way be unfortunate and unhappy. Well you are a droll little Sunbeam. However, I shall tell my story, but only the outline, for it's not so very interesting.'

'Two children, a boy and girl living in Paris, got tired of the big, gay city, and ran away one summer's afternoon into a big wood. Now, they thought, we are free; no more lessons, no one to command us, and no one to obey, we can do just as we like. And they gathered wild flowers, made bouquets of them, and sold them to the grand ladies who passed by. My story, Nina, I must tell you, is a true one, and the wood still exists. It is not a common wood, and is just on the outskirts of the city. Beautiful walks are cut through it, and one, the most beautiful of

all, is miles and miles in length. There, every afternoon, ladies from the big city drive in their carriages from four o'clock till seven. At six that carriage drive is crammed with carriages, so crammed that they have to go at a walking pace. There crowned heads from different countries may be seen taking their afternoon drive through that galaxy of fashion. Addie says 'twould remind her of a beautiful picture gallery. In other parts of the wood 'tis just as pretty and picturesque ; children seated on the grass, or playing at various games, or little babies toddling along at their nurse's side, or basket women with their heavy baskets, bending under the weight of oranges, apples, peaches and sweets, not to talk of their garden chair to rest on when they would be weary, and their big jar of cocoa to refresh you when you would be thirsty, calling out all the time, "À le plaisir mes dames, à le plaisir."'

'In other parts of this wood there are only tiny footpaths, and deep, deep, far in,

perhaps, there are no paths at all. But the wood also has beautiful lakes, and in one of them, right in the centre of it, there is a little island with a restaurant; you can get rowed over to it for two sous.

'Well,' continued Louie, 'it was to such a wood as this the children ran, and they lived a real gipsy life for a week or two; in the daytime they sold their bouquets of wild flowers, then in the evening they went through the wood to a little village hard by; there they bought their provisions for the next day, and then slept under one of the big trees, and there the police, who were on the look-out, found them one morning early, and home they marched the little runaways, with the threat that they would be sent to prison if they ever took to roaming again.'

'What a nice story, Louie, and what clever children.'

'Yes, they were a bit clever,' acknowledged the boy; 'but do you know, little Sunbeam, something strikes me. Suppose

you and I were to do the same. See, we are just at the foot of the mountain, and yonder is the wood where we had our luncheon; let us linger behind when passing by it on our way home, and then when the others won't be paying attention, we can make a rush, and run off.'

'And get lost, Louie?' demanded Nina, her eyes dancing with glee, for she loved anything in the shape of an adventure.

'Yes, Sunbeam, it will be great fun to have the others looking for us, but no fear we will be hungry, for there are plenty of nuts and blackberries in the wood.'

And so it was decided by those two little imps—they were to run away and get lost, as Nina expressed it. And away they did run when they got to the wood, giving the others the slip. Away, away, hand in hand went the two little madcaps, until at last, breathless and tired, they stopped to look behind, to see if the

others were on their track, but no sign of anyone, nothing to be seen but big trees on every side. The children were really lost in the wood, but for a time that mattered not to the little runaways, picking nuts and eating wild strawberries was great amusement. What greater could they find? But at last gathering twilight came on, the big trees looked like so many giants, and deep stillness reigned round. Then fear crept into the children's hearts.

'Louie, I do wish we never ran away, and were safe at home,' said little Nina, her big blue eyes filling with tears.

'So do I, Sunbeam. We have been a bit foolish, I acknowledge, and 'tis getting chilly. However we must only make the best of it.'

'And when the night comes on, Louie?'

'Then, Nina, we must only get up into one of the big trees, and perch there like the birds till morning.'

'Oh, I should not like that at all, Louie. I would surely fall off my perch. What shall we do? What shall we do?'

Here Nina began to cry, and Louie, almost crying also, said as bravely as he could, 'You would make a bad soldier, Sunbeam, for you would never fight to the last. There, don't cry, our case is not so hopeless, and to please you I shall whistle for the others. They are surely looking for us.'

But whistle, and scream, and call as he would, no answer came back; darkness came on, and at last the children, really frightened and tired from calling out, sat down and had a hearty cry.

In the meantime the other party took it for granted that the children had run on home before them, as they had often done before, and even when they got to Crag Castle they did not miss the little runaways until Edith asked after her little Sunbeam. Ernest answered that Nina and Louie had run on before, and he took it for granted

they had arrived safely, and perhaps were playing in the garden. He would go and fetch them. But no Louie or Nina could Ernest find.

Things were now looking serious, and Arthur M'Mahon, Mr Fox, Ernest and the butler set off provided with lanterns in search of the children. Someone suggested the wood, so to the wood they went.

It was now quite dark, but their lanterns guided them safely, and after a short search and some calling out, the little runaways were found, quite tired and weary, delighted to have their adventure over, and delighted to be on their way home again.

A week later Harry and Louie, accompanied by their mother, went to Crag Castle to say good-bye to Nannie O'Connor, who was to leave for Oakland Hall that afternoon. All the little folks had a play in the garden until the arrival of the squire and Aunt Sarah; then afternoon tea was served, and the elder

folks had a chat together, whilst the children amused themselves with music. Nannie, at the request of Ernest, played some of her own compositions. They were always like stories, Nina said, and truly little Sunbeam was right. At times Nannie's music would remind one of the wild roaring of the ocean in a storm, and the tossing of mighty ships, and the despairing shrieks of those who were swallowed up in its wild, angry waves. Or again, the music rang out soft and sweet, like a maiden singing. Then again it would change, and now it was a fiery battle, but at last the keynote of victory sounded, and there was a glad going home.

Such was Nannie's music. Sometimes sad and weird and mournful, sometimes gay and bright, but to little Sunbeam Nannie's music seemed like a last good-bye to-day. No glad note rang out at all, all was mournful and sad, and yet really beautiful.

Ernest seemed to think so too, for

when the little musician had finished he said warmly, 'Thank you very much, Nannie, your music is something wonderful; 'tis what one might dream about or read of, but never hear, and I shall miss it and the player sadly when you go away.'

Nannie blushed. Earnest was not given to paying compliments, especially to Nannie; on the contrary, he loved teasing her quaint little ladyship, but her music was so sadly sweet and mournfully beautiful this afternoon that the compliment came quite naturally. To Nannie his few words of praise were one of the sweetest pleasures and one of the brightest souvenirs of her summer stay in little Sunbeam's home.

CHAPTER VII

A COURT BEAUTY

'Oh, judge none lost, but wait and see
With hopeful pity, not disdain;
The depth of the abyss may be
The measure of the height of pain,
And love and glory that may raise
This soul to God in after days.'

PERRY PLUNKETT sat in his little boudoir by the side of a bright, sparkling little fire on a brisk March morning. Raw and cold it was outside, but indoors, in Perry's boudoir anyhow, all was cosy and warm. Much changed was the blind boy since we first made his acquaintance now nearly three years ago. Not that the poor, wan little face could get much paler, but the old bright, happy look that ever rested there in bygone days was there no longer.

Some great sorrow had evidently swept over the boy's life, leaving its trace behind. Yet resigned and calm and patient he looked this March morning as he sat wrapped in deep thought going over the past. For the boy was going over calmly and sorrowfully in his mind's eye the time that had elapsed since his sister Helen left him.

First he thinks of her departure for the Dublin Castle festivities. He remembers the morning well; how she came and kissed him over and over, her hot tears falling all the time on his face; then she sat by his side on the little stool, and taking his hand, spoke to him for a little while, spoke so lovingly and so affectionately; then the call came that it was time for her to start or she would miss the train, so with many tears and words of affection she left him. She had gone as far as the door when she came back to kiss him again, and then she hurried off, and though that was more than two years ago, Perry had never seen her since. Then he remembers her triumphs in

Dublin, and how high society had it that she was engaged to Sir Herbert's son and heir; but Helen did not remain very long in that city, for her stepmother's sister, the Hon. Mrs Summers, wrote inviting her for the London season—an invitation which Helen gladly accepted, for she wished to make new conquests, and, as she said in her letter to Perry, she was already growing tired of Sir Herbert's heir, and longed for new faces and new admirers.

So to London she went, and Perry remembers with a sigh what an impression her marvellous beauty made at Court. She was the acknowledged beauty of the season, dukes and earls were at her feet, all London spoke of the Irish beauty. Even high society itself went to high society balls just to get a glimpse of her. The girl's head was fairly turned with praise. The Hon. Mrs Summers never received such brilliant company, her drawing-rooms were filled to overcrowding, and she, fashion-

able woman that she was, and delighted with the impression Helen made, sought new admirers and new conquests for her.

There never had been such a brilliant season, never so much talk over a young *débutante* before.

Perry remembers all this, and as he does he covers his face with his hands, and in the anguish of his heart he cries out, 'Oh, Nellie, Nellie, would that you had been plain-looking, then you might have been true to your heart, true to your better nature, true to poor Hugh, who loved you so well, and you loved him too. Oh, I guessed it all along, but they turned your poor little head with praise, your poor little heart was too weak! Ah, Nellie, my loved sister, what a misfortune your beauty was.'

For a moment the boy seemed overpowered with grief, then he composed himself, for he did not wish that even Stephen should see his tears.

'I shall think it all out,' thought the boy.

'I shall go to the bitter end; it can't make me more sad than I am now.'

And so he did, thought it all out, thought how amongst all her admirers one, the richest and most dashing of all, was evidently in earnest. Others Helen had with long handles to their names; but much as they admired her, they could not dream of proposing to a girl who had no fortune but her face, but he, Lord Hamptoncourt, with his magnificent estates free from mortgages, was quite independent to do as he pleased. He was a fast man of fashion, and by name a Protestant, though in truth he professed little or no religion.

In the midst of the London season, whilst society papers still rang out with praise of the girl's marvellous beauty, Helen Plunkett eloped with Lord Hamptoncourt. In those days it was more difficult than it is now to get a dispensation, but they were finally married. Her elopement was the seven day's wonder, and then the lady Helen was forgotten,

high society found someone else to talk about; but the girl's elopement broke poor Perry's heart, and it broke another heart besides, a faithful, honest manly heart, for Hugh Fitzpatrick, in his far-off Indian home, heard of Helen's elopement. His life from thence was a waste and a blank, and his heart a broken one, all through the ambitious folly of his poor wayward child of fashion.

Perry still had his thoughts sadly running on the folly and worldliness of his misguided sister, when Tim Fitzpatrick was announced by the faithful Stephen. Tim was the same old gossiping good-for-nothing harmless Tim as of old, and after greeting Perry, he planted his chair right in front of the fire, then, with a foot on either hob, was ready to sit and gossip for hours to come. He was still a medical student, but from his frequent coming home, and some terms not filled in at all, he was now known by the name—in his own city anyhow—of 'Vacation Tim.'

A bad job was Hugh's going away for Tim. Had he been at home, or even in England, he would have forced Tim to be more earnest in his studies ; but as it was, with Hugh away in India, careless Tim did much as he pleased, and at the same time persuaded his father and mother that he was the most painstaking, hardworking student in Dublin, and that the occasional extra odd holidays he took were absolutely necessary for his health.

'Well, Tim, what gossip do you bring me to-day?'

'Lots, Perry; but first I must tell you the mail brought a letter from Hugh this morning. The old chap is going on first class it seems, making a name for himself, and reported with high honours for some act of bravery and high daring in the last skirmish the English had with those savages.'

'Hugh is sure to do well wherever he goes,' remarked Perry, 'he has such a clear head and honest heart.'

'Clear head indeed,' retorted Tim. 'Had

he a clear head, Perry, when he fell so madly in love with that silly sister of yours, the fair Helen, who ran away with a lord? Not that she loved that lord, but because he had a title. Until then,' continued Tim, who little guessed what pain he was giving Perry by his want of tact, 'I had given Hugh credit for a long head and a wise one, and a very clear one too, but when Helen jilted him, and he saw, or must have seen, as everybody else saw, that the girl had no heart, and would surely marry for money or title, but never for love, well, when Hugh saw that, instead of taking matters easy as any sensible man would have done, as I did for example, for you may remember, Perry, I was sweet on Helen—well, instead of taking the matter in a cool way, what does Hugh do,—he breaks his heart over the affair, sells out his commission, and joins another regiment that was ordered out to India, and there, I suppose,' continued Tim, 'he will stay, and leave his bones to be bleached by an Indian sun—die of the plague or some-

thing of that sort, and all because he loved too well a silly, ambitious girl. Do you call that like the act of a clear, wise, long-headed fellow, Perry, eh, old chum? Who was the wiser of the two, Hugh or I?'

'Tim, Tim, you are in a bad mood to-day; you are cruel to talk so of Helen.'

'What! have my words hurt you, then? I beg your pardon, Perry. You know what a blundering chap I am at times. There, let us talk no more of Hugh, and by Jove! after all, Perry, one can't much blame him, for Helen was beautiful—such marvellous beauty I have never seen before or since. Any news of her lately, Perry?'

'Yes, a letter came last evening—a letter for father. Poor Nellie's health is quite knocked up, it seems, since her baby died a week ago.'

'But it was only a chit, Perry.'

'Well, its little life was certainly very short, Tim—only a few weeks, but it had been a great comfort to poor Helen, she

was so proud to have it a girl. Lord Hamptoncourt could not interfere with its bringing up, or send her baby girl to college as he means to send the boy later on. The child would have been a companion for her, but alas! in the midst of poor Nellie's rejoicings, the little flower faded and died.'

'But there is another child left, Perry?'

'Yes, a baby boy twelve months old. A sturdy little fellow, it seems, with plenty of will, and as he is heir-apparent, will be brought up a Protestant. Alas! poor Nellie,' added the boy, 'has sadly found out by this time, I am afraid, that "All is not gold that glitters."'

Just then someone gave a timid little knock at the boudoir door, which was already open, and Tim, looking backwards from his comfortable seat, could see that it was little Emily, with her finger in her mouth, as was usual with the child when shy, or not quite sure that she was wanted.

'Hello! Emily, it's only you,' called out Tim. 'Do take that finger out of your mouth,' he continued, 'and put on a more pleasant countenance, for you are a perfect fright.'

'And you, Master Tim,' retorted the child, 'take your feet off the fireplace; it's not polite to have them on.'

Tim laughed immoderately at little Emily's sally, and Perry, to make the peace, called out,—

'Come in, little one, I have been looking out for you all the morning.'

'I was kept in the schoolroom an extra half-hour because I did not know my lessons when the governess came,' answered Emily; 'but even now,' added the child in a disappointed tone, 'I can't have a nice talk with you, Perry, because Master Tim is here.'

'Then come later on, little one. Come this afternoon for some nice stories, and we shall talk about a lot of useful things besides, for I wish to make my

little Emily a wise little Emily, and a good little one too.'

'I shall be sure to come, Perry, for the stories. I am getting good. I am not so naughty as I was, am I, Perry?' questioned the child.

'Not quite so wild and savage perhaps,' put in Tim. 'A little tamer, and that's all. You know, Miss Emily,' continued the incorrigible Tim, holding up his finger in admonition, 'such an ugly child as you are requires to be extra good to look amiable. So my advice is, tame in as quickly as you can.'

Emily's little sallow face flushed crimson, and for a moment she was strongly tempted to resort to her old weapon, viz., a good spit. It was a sure and a safe weapon. It always hit home, and then, best of all, the guilty party had time to take to its heels before the other party had time to recover its astonishment. But little Emily on this occasion restrained herself, for Perry patted her little head, and

called her a good child, his only little comfort.

Emily, soothed by Perry's praise, did not retort back at all at wicked Tim, and kissing Perry, and thanking him for his permission to let her return in the afternoon, she ran out of the room.

'A queer little imp that Emily,' remarked Tim, when the child was out of hearing. 'Do you know, Perry,' continued Tim, in a grieved tone, 'Emily is not half so amusing as she was. Why, a year or two ago she was a wild little savage. And I remember I would have to keep a sharp look-out coming upstairs, lest the little imp or her brothers might be on a landing overhead, for if they were, a spit, well aimed, would surely land in the middle of my nicely-combed hair, but as well might you try and catch the wind as the young ruffians. One could hear the scamper of little feet along the old corridors, but to catch the owners of the little feet was out of the question.

Now all that is changed,' continued Tim, ruefully. 'Emily is getting more sensible every day, her brothers are gone to college, and to me anyhow this old house seems quite sad and gloomy after the rakish imps. What say you, Perry?'

'Always the same droll Tim,' laughed Perry, and so the two chatted on through all the small hours of the morning, good friends and fast ones they were, though so unlike in character. Thus it often happens here below—calm, quiet, deep natures like Perry's seem to take a pleasure in the company of silly, good-for-nothing, harmless, talkative ones like 'Vacation Tim's.'

CHAPTER VIII

NINA'S BIRTHDAY

'When I was five her age was o, save some wing'd
moments newly caught—
But Time, whilst stealing life away, is adding to it
every day!'

THE sweet month of May, and Nina's birthday! Ah, it was a happy day for the poor who lived within miles and miles of Crag Castle.

All day little Sunbeam had been busy amusing the poor children who came like shoals of young sprats once a year to Nina's home. For on little Sunbeam's birthday all were welcome, and each one was sure of getting something useful in the way of a dress or petticoat, or shoes or stockings, or

perhaps quilts or blankets for their little beds at home. Then there was a large tent put up on the lawn and a substantial tea served to all the children, Nina running hither and thither through them, seeing that each little one got plenty in the shape of cakes and sweets and other good things. A real little sunbeam the child seemed, as she flitted now to one end of the long table, now to the other, brightening everywhere with her sunny presence and gay, happy laughter.

No young friends ever came to Crag Castle for Nina's birthday except Louie M'Mahon. Edith wished it so. The anniversary of the day that God had given her her little Sunbeam should always be devoted to the poor children. It was to be a gala day for them, and a gala day it truly was. After their substantial tea, the children had merry games, and amused themselves until six o'clock, when they all filed past Nina, to receive the birthday gifts, then

each little one went home with a merry little heart, laden with something useful.

Now all had left, and Nina, with her maid, set out with Louie for Grey Manor, for it was so arranged that morning, little Sunbeam, with her maid, was to see Louie home, instead of Mr Fox returning to fetch him. The evening was a soft balmy one, and the children loitered on the way picking violets and primroses, until at last, Susan, the maid, had to call to them, and bade them make haste for it was getting late. The children, with a merry laugh, hastened on a little, but now and again they still lingered, for the flowers were very tempting, and so fresh and so sweet that the very air seemed laden with their perfume. At last they gained the old Manor, at the gate of which Nina said good-bye to her little playmate, for it was too late, Susan said, to call in, so Nina turned homewards.

Twilight was now gathering round, and

little Sunbeam, tired out after her day's excitement, walked quietly by Susan's side. Presently they heard a footstep behind, and then a tall fellow passed them quickly, so quickly that Nina started; but even in the twilight, and though he had grown very tall, she knew him, it was Harry—Harry, that little Sunbeam thought was miles and miles away at college. He turned when Nina called out his name, and the child, in her warm-hearted little way, ran up and caught both his hands, and skipped round about him, but Harry, with a gloomy, sullen face, had not a word of greeting for little Sunbeam.

'Why did you come back, Harry? Have you got vacation already? And why do you look so gloomy?'

'Have I got vacation, Nina? No, I ran away from college. And why have I such a gloomy face? Why, but because father is just after horse-whipping me, so I am leaving this old Manor for ever.'

All this Harry said in a low tone, for he did not wish that Susan, who stayed a little behind, should hear.

'But, Harry, you are not going to run away from your home, are you?'

'Yes, Nina, you have said the right word, I am going to run away, and run away for ever. I don't care what becomes of me,' added the boy, in a reckless tone. 'Why should I?'

'Harry, 'twill be a dreadful bad thing to do.'

'It matters little to me, Nina, which or whether, but my foot I shall never put inside the old Manor again.'

'And have you money, Harry?'

'Well, only a few pence, for what little pocket money I had, running away from college took it, but I can sell this,' continued Harry, pointing to his gold horseshoe pin, 'or, if needs be, I can work, Sunbeam, or beg, or perhaps steal.'

'Oh, Harry, not that, not that,' answered little Nina, horrified at the notion of Harry stealing. 'There,' she added, pull-

ing out her little purse, and forcing it into the boy's hand, 'you will find, Harry, in it two bright sovereigns. Father gave them to me to-day for my birthday, but I have no use of them, Harry, indeed I have not,' added the child, earnestly, 'so you must keep them.'

The boy was touched by little Nina's warm-heartedness, and brushing away a tear, he said, in softened tones, 'I won't refuse your money, little Sunbeam, for it may be of use, but some day I hope to pay it back. You have been always so, Nina,' continued the boy, warmly, 'always generous, always loving, always bright, and I shall depend on you to keep this meeting with me a secret, for I wish to be clear off before they scent me out. Good-bye, little Sunbeam, and don't forget me.'

He raised his cap as he spoke, and then, with a bound over a hedge close by, he was gone — gone into the closing darkness, gone facing seawards, gone Nina knew not whither.

. . . . . .

'My little Sunbeam is very quiet and subdued to-night. Is it tired you are, little one?'

Edith was brushing out the child's golden curls as she spoke, for little Sunbeam was going to bed.

'Yes, mother, perhaps a little tired, for I ran about a lot all day, and yet it's not exactly that,' continued the child, hesitatingly, ''tis something else.'

'And what's the something else, my darling?'

'Oh, mother, would that I could tell you. Oh, how I wish I could!' exclaimed the child, impulsively, 'for I don't like to have a secret without you sharing it; it makes me so unhappy, so unhappy, mother.'

Edith, astonished at the child's manner and words, drew her little daughter towards her, and, kissing her, said soothingly, 'Surely my little Nina will let mother share her secret? What makes you so unhappy, darling?'

But the child's only answer was to put her head on her mother's shoulder, then

with her hair falling round her like a golden shower, she wept as if her little heart would break.

Edith gently raised the child's head, and brushing back the sunny locks, said, as she wiped away the tears from the little face, 'Nina, you must tell me what's the matter; I insist on it.'

Edith spoke firmly, and Nina knew by the ring in her mother's voice that she should obey. So with many tears, and in a broken, sorrowful way, little Sunbeam told her story; how she had met Harry on her return from Grey Manor; that he ran away from college, and was leaving home for ever as his father punished him; that he had gone Nina knew not whither, but surely gone away. He had asked her to keep all this a secret, but it, the secret, had weighed heavily on Nina's little heart, for she never had one before, and then she was so sorry for Harry, oh! she never could be happy again. All this the child told through sobs and tears.

Edith soothed her little one, and saw her to bed, then kissing her good-night, and promising to be back again before Nina would be asleep, Edith hurried off to write a few lines to Mrs Grey and tell her of Harry's mad flight.

The note was soon written and the butler on his way to Grey Manor with it. Then the mother returned to her child's room, but little Sunbeam was already asleep. A little hand under her tear-stained little cheek, another thrown backwards, resting on her sunny curls, a tired, unhappy look on the little face. Truly the child in her troubled sleep did not look to Edith a bit like her bright, careless little Nina, her laughing, dancing Sunbeam of a few hours ago. The mother sat by the little bedside and watched the troubled little sleeper, and as she sat and watched, she felt very wroth with Harry for throwing a shadow across her child's life, and for being the cause of little Sunbeam having

a secret that she would not share even with her mother.

Harry, Edith never cared for, never liked to see him such a favourite with Nina, but she cared for him less than ever now, and determined was she that from henceforward his invitations to Crag Castle would come like angel's visits, few, and far between.

But next day Edith relented a bit and was not quite so wroth with Harry, when she found that the foolish boy had really run away, gone, none knew whither, but no trace of him could be found, and thus Harry disappeared from his home, leaving his poor mother to sorrow for her unruly boy, and mourn for him as lost, and as one she would not see again. Even his father, the stern old major, seemed to have suddenly ten years added to his life, his form became bent, and his old military, elastic step left him.

Addie was to be home in two months,

gay doings were to have been at the old Manor, now all was changed, and sweet Addie's coming home would be a very sad one indeed.

CHAPTER IX

A WALK BY THE SEASHORE

'Hark they whisper : Angels say,
Sister spirit, come away.'

'Twas the eve of Addie's departure. She was to leave Paris next morning with her father—who came over for her—*en route* for her own fair land, the emerald gem of the wild Atlantic. Erin, the green isle of the west, the land of weeping skies, the land of chivalry and romance, the land with a sad, sorrowful past, but with its children always hoping for brighter days, the land celebrated for the beauty and virtue of its fair daughters and the bravery of its sons.

To that land was Addie returning, to

her own dear Erin, but what a sorrowful going home, for Harry's flight had thrown a cloud over the old Manor—a cloud that was likely to rest there for many a year; darker ones were even on the horizon, but we must not anticipate.

'Addie, so you are going to leave us, going off to that little island in the west. To-morrow you will be far away from here, and we will be after saying good-bye. Good-bye for how long, Addie? When will we two meet again?'

It was Gilbert, her cousin, who spoke. Both were on a balcony in her aunt's house. Addie was sitting down working at Irish point; it was to be a parting gift to her little cousin Adèle who had a fancy for pretty things.

As Addie worked, Gilbert, standing near, watched her nimble fingers, his heart very sore the while. Not much changed was sweet Addie during her stay in France. She had grown taller to be sure, and was also a shade slighter in her build. But the fair, gentle face,

with its crown of auburn hair, had still the same soft expression, and the same calm, dove-like look came from the deep blue eyes—in a word, Addie was the same sweet Addie as of old.

'When will we two meet again, Gilbert? Ah! that I can't say. I had hoped,' continued the girl, 'to bring you all over this summer and have a gay time at the old Manor, but poor Harry's flight has put an end to all.'

'What an unruly chap that boy must be,' remarked Gilbert, 'and how very unlike you, Addie.'

'Oh, I am no perfection,' answered the girl, smilingly, 'and you must not spoil me, Gilbert, by making me believe I am.'

'For me, Addie, you are the sweetest and dearest girl in the whole world,' answered her cousin, warmly, 'and,' he added, 'you can little imagine or dream what influence your sweet presence has had on my life. I am changed,' he continued, 'since we became acquainted,

so changed, Addie, that I scarcely know myself. I have got to love everything that is pure and good, for it reminds me of you, my sweet cousin, and this afternoon I won't deny it, my heart is torn in twain at the thought of our parting to-morrow morning. Oh, Addie,' he continued passionately, 'would that that parting hour would never come, for me 'twill sound like my death knell, for I love you, my sweet cousin, love you as I never loved, never will love another. Is my love unrequited, Addie? Is there any hope?'

'Gilbert,' answered the girl, gravely and gently, 'listen to me, and don't interrupt what I am going to say. As a cousin I like you, or, if you wish it, I love you very much, but only as a cousin, Gilbert, and never can I love you after any other fashion. Always I shall think of you and love you as my favourite cousin, but to give you the love you speak of, that is out of the question, and I hope, dear Gilbert, you

will put such love for me away from your heart, and only think of me as your dear cousin Addie. Besides,' continued the girl, gravely, 'I doubt very much if human love will ever occupy my heart, for I don't believe this world and its worldly love could ever satisfy it, but this is a secret for only you, Gilbert; and now, dear cousin, we shall talk of something else, and let us both forget what was said just now.'

So of other things they spoke, Gilbert hiding as best he could a sorely-stricken heart, and next day they parted, parted to meet no more, until they would meet in the other world beyond the grave; but Gilbert never forgot his cousin Addie, and the remembrance of the few years they knew each other always remained with Gilbert. To the end that sweet remembrance was as his guiding star, it kept his heart pure and unsullied.

In after years he became a great man, but always remained a good one,

with a heart that the world spoiled not, nor corrupted not, a heart that always remembered sweet Addie Grey.

On a hot July afternoon the warm sunshine was shedding its bright radiance round the old Manor. Addie was home a twelvemonths now. Her coming home had been a sad one, but her sweet presence soon brightened up the old Manor, and though Harry's absence was still mourned for, her mother, as time went by, became less sad and less downcast, and the old major less stern and less grum, and Louie worked hard at his tasks, that he might be ready the sooner to accompany Addie in her afternoon walks, walks that often ended in visits to the poor.

Addie's deeds of charity and mercy were known for miles and miles round the old Manor. She was welcomed by all. For each she had a sweet smile and a bright word. The peasantry had come to look upon her as their ministering angel, and with respect and almost awe, and in that

kindly way so peculiarly Irish they welcomed her to their poor homes.

Nina had walked over to Grey Manor this July afternoon with Ernest, and Nannie O'Connor was there also with the squire and Aunt Sarah. Addie proposed a walk to the seashore. The mother of one of the fishermen was very ill, and she wished to visit her. A little basket with good things was quickly prepared, and off, in right merry glee, the younger portion started with Addie on her mission of charity.

Old Mrs Cantwell was very ill indeed, and with her eighty-seven years had a poor chance of recovery. The fisherman was sitting at the fire as they entered, trying to boil up with some sticks a little pot of potatoes, but immediately that he saw the little group at the door, he stood up, and he, with his bright little wife, placed chairs for the new-comers, and welcomed them in a kindly, hearty fashion and in that way the Irish have of making one feel at home. But there were not

enough chairs for all, so Nina and Louie asked permission to wait outside and gather shells by the seashore—a permission which Addie readily granted, so off the children ran.

On the shore before them were the fisherman's two little boys—bright, little lads of some four and five years old. They were digging a hole in the sand by the side of a little rock, and so occupied were they with their work that they took no notice of Nina and Louie, who had gone behind the little rock and were now peeping out at the little workers without being seen.

When the hole was dug, Con, the eldest, produced a dead seagull from his pocket, and, putting it carefully into the hole, bade Jimmy, a little urchin of four, fill up quickly but gently. Jimmy shovelled away with all his might, and in an earnest, manful, little way, as if he thought the work a mighty important one. When finished, both boys sat down on the sand, and with their fingers began to draw all kinds of droll,

fantastic figures; then getting tired of that, they built sand castles, but in the midst of their building, Jimmy, turning to his little brother, said very earnestly,—

'Don't you think our seagull is gone to heaven by this?'

'I daresay it is,' answered Con. 'Let us try.'

So the hole was dug at again, and to the little lad's great disappointment the seagull was found in the bottom just as they had placed it.

'Not gone to heaven after all,' blubbered Jimmy, half crying. 'Why I thought it would.'

'It must be a bad bird,' remarked Con, 'and I think, Jimmy, we ought to take it up and throw it into the sea.'

So into the waves it was thrown, and the children watched it with excitement as it was carried out to sea.

Nina and Louie had come out from their hiding-place behind the rock in the meantime, and now stood on the shore with Con and Jimmy, watching the dead

seagull as it floated on the top of the mighty waves; but soon one huge one swallowed it up, and to the eager eyes of the children it was seen no more.

'There, it is gone,' exclaimed Louie. 'Let us go back to the rock, Nina, and sit on it until the others come.'

So to the rock they went, and perching themselves on the top of it, watched Jimmy and Con, who had now returned to the building of their sand castles. Very intent the little fellows seemed to be with their work, but now and again a wave, stronger than the rest, would come in and wash all their castles away, so their work had to be begun all over again. Still the little lads did not lose courage, they began again quite cheerfully, evidently pleased to have some force to contend with, it added to their excitement and pleasure, and kept them busy at work.

'What brave little chaps they are,' remarked Louie. 'See, Nina, they never grow tired or disheartened. When I am

big,' continued the boy, 'I should like to have them in my regiment, for they would make brave soldiers.'

'In your regiment, Louie?'

'Certainly, Sunbeam. You don't suppose I am going to remain on tamely here? My only regret will be leaving you behind. How I wish, Nina, you were a boy,' continued Louie, 'then you could be a soldier too, and we would be always together; that would be nice, would not it, Sunbeam?'

'I scarcely know, Louie,' answered the child, with a wise shake of her golden curls. 'Ernest says I never could do serious work, or be steady and determined over anything; that my mission in this world will be to brighten other people's lives, but that I shall be a little madcap to the end, a dancing little Sunbeam, and nothing more. Father laughs,' continued Nina, 'when Ernest talks like that, and calls Ernest his wise boy, and says he is right.'

'Well, perhaps he is,' answered Louie,

rather reluctantly. 'Still, Nina, it would be nice to have you a boy.'

'And have no little Sunbeam, Louie?'

'Ay, that I forgot. You are right, Nina, 'tis best as it is, and if I were living in olden times,' continued the boy, 'and were an Irish king, I would make you my queen, Nina, and we would live in a big strong castle with brave, faithful warriors, and have a right good merry time of it.'

'Oh, Louie, I should not care for that at all, to be a queen I mean, for I would have to be too serious and stately and grand; but, Louie,' added the child, eagerly, 'suppose you make a story out of them olden times. Do, please, but don't make me a queen.'

'Always stories, Nina. What a baby you are still. However, if I did make a story out of olden times, as you say, let me see how it would run—Well, I would have Ernest very brave and very bold, and heir-apparent to the throne of Munster, and he would marry Addie

Grey, a chieftain's daughter. I would be the chieftain's son, and you, Nina, would be a bright beautiful little fairy beloved by all. Your mission would be to flitter about from one castle to another, bringing rich and rare gifts to everyone, and though all would love you for that, they would love you still more for the brightness and happiness you would cast about wherever you would go, for, when you would appear, all gloom and sorrow would run away, and there would be nothing but sunshine, and on that account you would be known far and near by the name of "little Sunbeam."'

'And Ernest, would he be king afterwards, Louie?'

'Yes, but after a hard fight, for when the old king, his father dies, a younger son, who had married another king's daughter, steps in, and with the aid of his father-in-law, claims, and fights for the throne of Munster, but in the long run the rightful heir wins, and is crowned in great grandeur, all his nobles and

chieftains being present, and many others besides. Addie sits by his side a reigning queen, and such a beautiful and good queen, that everyone loves her.'

'I am there also on the coronation day, a brave chieftain, feared in war, and loved in peace, and many chieftains' daughters, and even princesses, would like to marry me, but I turn with haughtiness from all. My heart they cannot win, and to the end I shall never marry, and why? Simply because I love a little fairy called Sunbeam, but as Sunbeam is only a fairy she cannot marry. Her mission is to scatter far and wide rich gifts and rare gifts, and, better still, sunshine and mirth and happiness, and so make every home bright and gay, but she must always live in her little castle, which is hidden away, no one knows where. 'Tis said, that if a brave chieftain or prince could find it out, the enchantment would be broken, and little Sunbeam could marry, and many times

I go in search of that fairy castle, but alas! only to come home tired out and dispirited. In the end I resign myself to my fate, and little Sunbeam is a fairy to the last chapter, and I a warrior bold, and so my story ends.'

'Tis a sad ending, Louie.'

'Then I shall change it, Nina. One evening, after a long weary march, I lie down in a bright little glen amongst ferns and wild flowers. I am quite tired out, so, with a tuft of moss for a pillow, I doze off asleep. Presently I hear singing, beautiful singing, close by. I start up, rub my eyes, and look around. Where am I? All is changed. I must have wandered far in my sleep, for I am now in a beautiful garden. It is a moonlight night, and I can see that the garden is full of flowers, and the trees, the big high trees, bear flowers too. Quite near is a lovely castle made of moss, and with flowers growing all around it, and here and there through the flowers I can see little fairies running hither and thither. They seem to

be dancing, or something of that sort, and as they dance they sing, but such singing, Nina, such sweet singing, such as you and I never heard. I listen entranced, and feel bewildered by such beauty. I had often heard of fairyland, but never really understood what a beautiful place it was before. Suddenly out from the castle comes another little fairy, but such a fairy! the loveliest of them all. I recognise her at once, 'tis little Sunbeam. Then this must be her castle, the fairy castle that I have been searching for all my life. Up I start with my drawn sword, determined at any cost to get into that beautiful fairy castle and so break the enchantment. But immediately the little elfs see me they make a rush for it, and bar all the doors and windows, but I, with my big sword, smash the great door that leads into the hall, and proud of my victory so far, I stride in. Alas, the enchantment was not yet broken, for lions and tigers, and all sorts of wild animals

were on the stairs, and I should pass through them before I would get to Sunbeam.

'I could see the little fairy overhead looking down at me through her sunny curls; she was laughing, and beckoning at me to come on. My sword was sharp, and my hand powerful and strong. I made a rush up that terrible stair, hit right and left, and my sword being so sharp and so strong did wonders. Wild animals fell on every side, and their groans were fearful as they fell never to rise again. On and on I went, up higher and higher, and now I had almost gained the top, the enchantment would soon be broken, and Sunbeam won.'

'Oh, don't break it at all, Louie,' exclaimed Nina. 'I would rather not. Let me be always a fairy in your story, and you a warrior bold.'

'Then let it finish as I finished it first, Nina. There! Ernest is calling us. We must go home.'

The children joined the other little

group, and all walked towards the old Manor together.

'What a nice woman the fisherman's wife is,' remarked Nannie, 'and how clean and bright she has the little cottage, everything in its own place and all in perfect order.'

'You would always find it so, Nan, go whatever time you would,' put in Addie, 'and yet the family are very poor. But our visit there was longer than I intended,' continued the girl, 'and we must hasten now, for I am sure they are on the look-out for us at home.'

Briskly the little group stepped out, chatting gaily as they went, but ere they had got half way, Addie had a fit of coughing, and though her cheeks were flushed from the exercise, Ernest remarked that a black look was under the deep blue eyes.

'Addie, you have over-exerted yourself,' cried the youth in alarm. 'Let us sit down here on this sunny bank and rest awhile.'

Addie, much against her will, was forced to comply. She seemed to have lost breath, and looked quite exhausted. After a little while they resumed their walk, and Nannie, taking Addie's hand affectionately in hers, said anxiously, 'You are not as strong as you were, Addie.'

'Well, Nannie, perhaps not quite; a little cough comes now and again. When I feel it coming on, if I am in the house, I run out of the room and away where mother won't hear, for it would worry her, and poor mother has had enough to worry her already. Besides,' added the girl, 'mother is so nervous, and I know my little cough will pass away, so I beg of you, Nan, say nothing about it.'

'And have you nothing but the cough, Addie? You looked quite tired out just now.'

'Nothing, Nannie, I assure you, nothing. Only sometimes in my walk with Louie of late, I remarked that I get tired out; I don't know why.'

'Addie, you must consult a doctor, and

this very afternoon; that I shall insist upon.'

'Twas Ernest who spoke. He had been listening to the conversation of the two girls, and as he listened, striding along in silence, a dark shadow had passed over his handsome face, and he spoke now in an anxious, determined way, his voice trembling the while. To him Addie had always been very dear, but he had never known till now how much he loved her. The light broke upon him suddenly, and his only wonder was that he did not guess it before. What if her cough, and getting tired out so easily, would prove something serious. The very thought drove Ernest almost mad, and it was with a sad, anxious heart he entered the old Manor, and with a sadder one still he turned homewards that evening with little Nina, for the doctor's face, after examining Addie, was a serious one.

'The girl,' the doctor said, 'had overgrown her strength. There was a weak-

ness in one of the lungs, but with much care and attention she would pull through.'

Alas! poor Addie did not seem as if she would pull through; every day saw her grow weaker and weaker, and when the autumn came and the leaves began to fall, Addie was in consumption. Still she persisted in visiting the poor, and even singing in the little choir in the village church, her rich, full voice rising high above the others, filling the sacred edifice with its sweet melody. All persisted in thinking Addie was not dying, even for a long time she would not believe it herself. 'Twas a lingering consumption, at times the girl looking and feeling very strong, and at times knocked up, but always holding bravely on. For all she had as usual a sweet smile and bright word, and though, as time went by, her face grew paler, and the dark circles round her eyes darker, and the deep blue eyes looked brighter, still the fair face retained all its charm, the sweet, radiant look was

always there — Addie would be sweet Addie to the end.

Nannie O'Connor came often to the old Manor, and stayed by the week together. The girls were fast friends and great company for each other, and frequently Ernest and Nina walked across the fields by the short cut leading from Crag Castle to Grey Manor. Thus the little folks often met, and thus grew up between them friendships that after years would not sever.

CHAPTER X

ADDIE'S WISH

'I know that he has loved and lost
What life may ne'er give back;
The flowers that bloom'd in freshness once
Have wither'd on his track.'

THUS Addie lingered on for two years. One afternoon, six years after the opening of our story, Addie went, accompanied by Louie, to the little church to practise some singing with the village choir for the following Sunday. When the practising was over, and the village children had dispersed, the choirmaster on this occasion, instead of remaining on playing and practising all alone, as he usually did, shut the little harmonium and quickly joined Addie and her brother, who were now on their way home.

'Miss Addie, can I have a word with you?'

He was a venerable-looking old man was the choirmaster, with his long white hair floating on his shoulders, and had known Addie since her babyhood.

'Certainly, Mr Roberts, and twenty if you wish,' answered Addie, after her sweet fashion, as she walked a little slower and thus let Louie on before.

'Well, Miss Addie, what I have to say I shall say quickly, for I can scarcely trust myself to talk in that strain at all.' Some deep emotion seemed to have stirred the old choirmaster, he paused for a moment and then went on, his voice trembling the while, 'Miss Addie, I suppose you know my wife died very young, and left me one little babe to take care of. A sweet child was my little Sally, and she grew up a beautiful girl, but, alas! just as she numbered twenty summers, she fell into delicate health. I did all I could for my darling, but she faded before my eyes, and ere

I scarcely knew it, she was under the green sod in the old churchyard. Well, gradually I got reconciled to my Sally's death, but to-day the old wound seems to be open, and her memory has come back quite fresh, and it was your face in the little church, Miss Addie, as you sang just now, that made me think of Sally, and it struck me, struck me forcibly, that you were over-exerting yourself, as you are not very strong. That is why I asked for a few words just now,' explained the choirmaster, 'to beg of you, Miss Addie, to give up singing in our little village church, till — till you grow stronger. I shall miss you,' continued Mr Roberts, 'and the choir will miss your sweet voice, Miss Addie — your sweet voice that always made me think of heaven, why I don't know. But your health must be considered,' he continued, 'so I beg of you don't sing again till—till you are stronger.'

The old choirmaster had spoken hurriedly and eagerly, and did not give

Addie a chance of putting in a word. What he was saying seemed painful to him, and he said it like one who wished to get rid of a disagreeable job as quickly as possible. When he had finished, Addie said quietly, and after her own sweet fashion,—

'Thank you very much, Mr Roberts, for your anxiety about my health. I shall follow your advice with regard to the singing, though it will be a great trial; 'tis such a pleasure to me. But you must let me sing next Sunday,' continued the girl, pleadingly, 'and then after that I won't sing again, I promise you, till—till I sing in heaven.'

Addie spoke the last words calmly, and as if of an everyday occurrence. The old choirmaster looked for a moment into the girl's sweet face, then turned his head hastily away, and brushing from his cheek a silent tear, said as calmly as he could,—

'Miss Addie, so be it—next Sunday for the last time, I mean,' he added,

correcting himself, 'till—till you are stronger.'

The old choirmaster raised his hat as he spoke, and then returned to the little church to pray for his Sally and sweet Addie Grey.

'Well, what has old Roberts been saying to you, Addie?' asked Ernest M'Mahon.

He with Nina happened to pass by the little village church just as the practising was over, and they had joined Louie whilst Addie was talking to the choirmaster. Now Nina and Louie walked on before, whilst Ernest and Addie lingered a little behind.

'Not much, Mr Curious,' answered Addie, laughingly. 'Mr Roberts is a bit worried over my health, and thinks I exert myself too much in singing. So next Sunday, Ernest, you will hear me for the last time singing with the little choir. After that I won't sing again,' added the girl, calmly, 'until I sing in heaven, and so I have told Mr Roberts just now.'

'Addie, how cruel you are to talk so. Why I thought yesterday you were looking really better, and now that the summer is here you may get very strong.'

'Ernest, don't deceive yourself, there is no such thing as getting strong for me,' answered the girl, gently. ''Tis gone past that,' she continued in the same calm tones. 'Now, Ernest,' went on Addie, 'I have had something on my mind to say to you this while past, but somehow had not courage; I would like to say it now if you will let me.'

'Let you, Addie,' answered the young man, passionately. 'Oh, it's not for you to ask, 'tis for me, on the contrary, to thank you for granting me the privilege to listen to aught you wish to say.'

'Then, Ernest, as we are now in the park, let us rest here a while on the trunk of this old tree. Here we can talk quietly. Nina and Louie,' added the girl, smilingly, 'have too much to say to each other to interrupt us. Now, what I wish to say,' continued Addie, half hesitatingly,

'I have been thinking of saying this long time—and I hope you won't grow impatient with me, Ernest, if what I am going to say won't be pleasing to you. Hear me out to the last,' continued the girl, 'and bear with me.'

'Bear with you, Addie! Oh! how unjust you are! Don't you know, can't you believe that I love you; that the very ground you walk on seems sacred to me, seems as if an angel had passed there; that your slightest wish is for me a command; that each time I see in your sweet face that shadowy look, that look of the other land, my heart is as it were pierced with twenty daggers and torn in two? And when I am not by your side, Addie,' continued Ernest, 'when I am at home, and the thought strikes me, as it often does, that only a few fields divide us now, but soon a deep chasm will come and we will be divided till we meet beyond the grave, then Addie, when that thought comes, I strike my head with my closed hand, and ask myself why I don't

go mad. I suffer horribly, horribly,' continued the youth, 'and yet you ask me if I would bear with you whilst you say a few words. Why, Addie, I would die for you, give my life, my heart's blood for you, if it could save yours. Can't you, won't you believe me?'

'Hush, Ernest, those are wild words. I do believe you, believe that you love me, and yet it gives me pain to be forced to believe in such wild loving. I have prayed,' continued Addie, 'and shall go on praying, Ernest, that you may become more reasonable, and that, as time goes by, and when I am dead and gone, you will come to think of me, and pray for me, as you might for a dear sister gone before. Then I hope, after a little while,' added the girl, 'you will give your heart to another, another who is really worthy of it, Ernest, and who loves you.'

'What do you mean, Addie? Give my heart to another? You know 'tis false, 'tis false! 'Twill never be so.'

'Nay, Ernest, after a little while I hope, on the contrary, it will,' said the girl, gently, 'for I must tell you,' she continued firmly, 'that even if I were to live, and get quite strong again, my heart would never be filled with earthly love—a religious life would claim me, for my heart could never be satisfied with earthly ties, and my life would be a hidden one away in some holy cloister. I tell you this,' continued the girl, 'to let you see, Ernest, that even if I lived my heart would never be yours, our lives would be divided; so when I am gone, and you have come to think of me and pray for me as some dear sister gone before, then, Ernest, I would wish you to think also of a quaint little friend of ours, Nannie O'Connor, who loves you so dearly.'

'Loves me? What do you mean, Addie?'

'I mean what I say, Master Ernest. My eyes are sharper than yours, and, believe me, in that quaint bit of old

china you will find much to love and admire.'

'Nannie loves me? Why, Addie, you bewilder and puzzle me. Quaint little Nan, as I still call her, and I are always sparring; you know yourself, Addie, how we dispute.'

'Yes, I know, Ernest, and your sham battles often amused me; but I tell you, all the same, the girl loves you. Will you promise me to think of what I told you and my wish when I am gone?'

'Your wish, Addie?'

'Yes, Ernest, my wish, for I wish and hope that you and our quaint little friend will one day be married.'

Never, Addie, never! Don't drive me mad by talking so. Oh! you are cruel, cruel.'

'You think so now, Ernest, but on some future day I hope you will think otherwise. And now let us get to the old Manor, for I feel a bit tired and weary after my long lecture,' added the girl, smilingly. 'And,' continued Addie, playfully, 'I thank the

listener for being so patient, and for bearing with me to the end. Now, if my listener,' continued the girl, coaxingly, 'would only promise to try and remember my wish, it would make me so happy.'

'Nay, Addie, don't press me,' answered the young man, sorrowfully, 'for my heart is too sore and too sad to promise to remember such a cruel, strange wish. 'Tis out of the question,' he added passionately. 'I cannot, dare not promise, for I would never fulfil it. I love you, Addie,' continued the young man in a gentler tone. 'My heart can never be another's. I am sorry for our quaint little friend, for I have always liked her after an odd kind of a fashion, as one might like a droll, strange little piece of old china, or a quaint, little, old-fashioned china figure. After such a fashion I have liked our little friend, and after such a fashion I shall always like her. To me, Addie, she will be to the end dear, quaint little Nan, and nothing more.'

CHAPTER XI

WANDERINGS

'Review the past, 'tis well to trace
The path thy feet have trod,
And mark how angels' hands have led
The wanderer up to God.'

AMONGST the stragglers in one of the out-of-the-way, unfashionable streets in New York, on a broiling July day, was a young man of eighteen or thereabouts. His walk was slouchy and uncertain, and his face had a hungry, eager, pinched look about it, and withal a dogged, sullen look also, that unmistakable stamp that one sees marked on some faces, that stamp which tells you that the owner has fallen even in his own estimation, and is reckless as to how he gains his livelihood.

Such a mark was on the youth's face as he walked along in a careless, straggling fashion, casting now and again a furtive, hungry look around. The hot sunshine came beating down upon him, but still he walked on and on. At last, overcome by heat and hunger, he entered a little shop where odd things were sold, determined to ask a piece of bread, but ere he had time to speak he fell down faint and exhausted, and remembered no more.

When Harry Grey, for it was he, opened his eyes, and returned to consciousness, he found himself in a small, neat little room, lying on a small, neat little bed, and a small, neat little woman sitting beside him.

'Where am I? What has happened?' he asked wonderingly, for he was evidently well cared for, and to the poor wandering lad it was something new to find himself so nursed, and with a good bed to lie upon.

'Whist, Allana, or you'll make your-

self sick agin. Sure the doctor said ye weren't to spake at all, or ye'll be only fall'ng sick for a sucond time. I've been watch'ng for the crisis all the morn'ng,' continued the good woman, 'for himself tould me they'd come to-day, and sure 'tis proud and glad I am that they are past, for 'twas a mighty anxious time, that I can tell ye, a mighty anxious time for me.'

'And who are you?' demanded Harry, 'and what claim can I have on your charity?'

'Oh, as to who I am, asthore, I am only a poor, honest woman, liv'ng in New York City with my husband. We try to make a liv'ng out of our little shop. We come from Ireland a good many years ago, and set up this little business, and thanks be to God we are do'ng fair enough. Our big buy Paddy is a sailor, and nearly always on say, so there's not many mouths to be fed. This is Paddy's little room,' continued the good woman. 'Paddy is a good gorsoon, wan that any

mother might be proud ive, and now, ahorra, as to the claim on my charity, why ye have the claim that's on every mother's heart that has a buy away on say, or somewhere, and sees another poor lad faint'ng with want and hunger. Sure if me own buy was hungry, wouldn't I like a kind neighbour to give him a bit, and says I to meself that day, when I saw ye stretched out in our little shop, as if ye ware dead, that poor buy has a mother, too, and maybe she's far away. I'll do for him as I'd like another to do for my own gorsoon if he ware in want. I'll nurse him till he comes round, and thin, when he's strong enough, maybe we could find out his friends.'

Harry had been listening in silence to the good woman as she rattled on thus, and now that she had finished, and gave him a drink, and told him to keep quiet, he did not feel inclined to break that silence. Then the tidy little woman bustled about the room, arranged his bedclothes, smoothed his pillow, and

placing another drink at his bedside, told him she had to go now to the shop and let her husband to his dinner. After that she would peep in, she said, before she would take her own, lest he might want for something, and in the evening, when the shop would be shut, she would come and bring her knitting and sit by his bedside and talk to him, and in that way he would not be lonely.

True to her word was Mrs Peggy Keane. She brought her knitting in the afternoon, and in her bright, chatty little way whiled away the time for Harry, and so she nursed him and cared for him during his long convalescence, never growing tired of her extra work, never weary of her brave deed of charity. Always in good humour, always laughing and light-hearted, till at last, by her bright, kindly ways, she quite won over the youth's gloomy, moody heart. He told her all of his early history, and part of his restless wanderings in America. How he ran away from home, and went to Queens-

town on foot, hiding in the hedges for the most part in the daytime, and doing nearly all his travelling by night. For him it was no hardship, he was always recklessly inclined, and liked adventures. To be sure he sometimes got an odd lift from a country man from one village to another, for his great aim was to get to Queenstown as quickly as possible, lest his family might find him out.

Then from Queenstown he worked his way over to America in one of the big sailing vessels. How, landed there, he still had one of Nina's bright gold sovereigns, and it kept him in food whilst he wandered westward, doing an odd day's work now and again. After that he joined a wild band, who gained their livelihood as best they could. He stayed with them nearly three years, but the police getting notice of their whereabouts, they dispersed. Some were taken and some escaped. He was amongst the latter. He came to New York on foot, and—she knew the rest.

Not all in one day was the good little woman told this. It took weeks before Harry gave her all his confidence, but by degrees he gave it, and by degrees that kind little Irishwoman tried to soften the youth's heart and bring him to repentance, and she succeeded at last. Then, after a very hard struggle, she got him to write home acknowledging his errors and asking for forgiveness.

Soon an answer came—at least as soon as it could in those days, for the big heavy sailing vessels did not travel as fast as the light, up-to-date ones do now. Harry's mother wrote, and Addie enclosed a few lines. Heart-breaking letters. His sister was dying, his mother inconsolable at the thought of having to part with her sweet Addie, who was 'going away,' as Addie expressed it herself. Still the poor mother's heart in all her grief thanked God that He was giving her back a long-sought-for, long-mourned-for child. Told Harry that the money enclosed was for his passage home, and that there was

besides a fifty-pound note for the good woman who nursed him. Begged of her boy to come on at once, otherwise sweet Addie would be gone away, gone to her heavenly home, and that it was through her influence he could count on his father's pardon. Then with many fervent wishes for his safe voyage and his arrival before his sister's death, and with a mother's blessing on her poor, wandering, wayward boy, the letter ended. Addie's note was very short, just asking Harry to start for home immediately, and promising his father's pardon. Then she finished it by saying that she was now satisfied to 'go away,' to go to her home beyond the skies, for her loved brother Harry was found, and coming back again to the old Manor.

Harry showed both letters to his kind Irish nurse. The good-hearted little woman was indignant at the thought of being paid—a penny she would not take, and Harry saw she would be highly offended if he insisted, so he gave it to her

husband, asking him to put it in the bank for Paddy, so that he could, when inclined to marry, set up business for himself, and not be always away at sea.

Harry's preparations for leaving were quickly made, and good, honest Peggy shed many a tear when parting with him.

'Sure we'll be dead lonesome after ye, Mr Harry, and 'tis meself that will miss ye most. Paddy's little room will be idle agin, with noth'ng in it to make me think ive him but the wan little cap that's always hang'ng upon the wall. 'Twas the cap Paddy wore when he was lav'ng poor auld Ireland. He was only a little gorsoon at the time, but that was the cap that saw him at his last football match on the auld Irish sod, and that cap, Paddy says, is niver to be thrown away, but kipt as a reminder of auld times and auld days.'

They were in Paddy's room as the little woman rattled on thus. Her husband was roping Harry's little trunk, and Harry himself was standing quietly by, his hands in his pockets, watching Jerry Keane,

and doing his best to look manly, and keep back his tears. At last the trunk was tightly roped, everything was ready. Jerry would see him as far as the ship, so bidding kind, warm-hearted Peggy good-bye, and with her words, "God be wid ye, God bless ye, Mr Harry, and bring ye safe home to the auld land," ringing in his ears, he left the little shop which he had entered some two months before a starving youth, left it with repentance in his heart, and a resolve to do better for the future; and dear Irish Peggy, as she looked after him, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, repeated again her fervent prayer, that God might bless him, and that his journey might be a safe one.

Then the little woman rattled about the shop attending to her customers, wiping away with her apron now and again a silent tear. Never did it once strike that simple soul that there was cause for her to be proud, or that her deed was a brave one. To her simple,

kindly heart, anyone would have done the same, and though the nursing of that erring, wandering boy, and bringing him back to repentance, was all recorded in heaven, kind, simple-hearted Peggy never dreamt of such a thing. And so on the Last Day, when Life's Recording Book is opened, many things that the world noticed not will be found written therein. Many kindly acts and deeds of charity, done by simple-hearted, kindly souls, whose hearts knew naught of pride or craftiness, simple hearts and kindly hearts, hearts of gold with no dross in them, hearts like kind, warm-hearted Peggy Keane's.

CHAPTER XII

GONE AWAY

'Calm on the bosom of thy God
Young spirit rest thee now;
Even while with us thy footsteps trod
His seal was on thy brow.'

'MOTHER, is it a fine day?'

'A delightful morning, Addie, love, and so beautifully soft, that the little birds are singing in the garden. Listen! You can even hear them chirruping from this; they think, love, it is August instead of October they have.'

'Then, mother, if it is so very fine, I think I can get up and sit in my arm-chair and have it rolled into your room; then from your window I can see the old garden, and I have a wish to see it to-day.'

'But you might be cold, darling.'

'Oh, no, mother, no danger of that; you know how I always liked to feel the fresh air blowing on my face. So you will let me open your window, won't you, mother darling?'

How could the poor mother refuse that fanciful wish of the dying girl, to get up and see the old garden once more, and feel the fresh air blowing on her face.

So Addie was warmly dressed, and sat at the open window with a white woollen shawl round her, and her thick auburn hair falling loosely on her shoulders, for she would have it so; it gave her a headache, she said, to have it in a coil, so her mother let it flow loosely down.

A sweet fragile flower she looked, truly the sweetest flower in the old Manor. And as she sat thus in her mother's room, never did she look so lovely, with a bright hectic blush on her sweet face, and her deep blue eyes shining with an unearthly brightness which added

to the girl's fair loveliness, and made her look like some sweet picture — too fair, too beautiful for this earth.

A fair fragile lily was our sweet Addie, to bloom yet a few days longer in the old Manor, and then be culled by angels' hands, and borne aloft to heaven.

'Mother, where is Harry?'

'In the study, darling. He is trying to make up for lost time, and is working hard now with Mr Fox. What a blessing, what a comfort for me, Addie, to have his heart so changed.'

'Truly, mother, it is a blessing, and for me a great comfort also before I go away. And Louie, what is he doing, mother?'

'At work with his Greek and Latin tasks. He has been asking after you, Addie, but I told him you were sleeping, and could not be disturbed; but now that you are up, I can call him if you wish, he will be only too glad to come and sit with you by the open window.'

'Not yet, mother, for I wish to have a chat with you. Has Ernest called this morning?'

'No, darling, but he will be sure to come by-and-by, as he never fails to do so every day.'

'Then if he comes to-day, mother, darling, I would like to see him, and Nina also. You are fond of Sunbeam, are you not, mother?'

'Certainly, my darling; anyone should love that fair child.'

'Well, mother, I shall tell you a secret. You know I will soon be called away, and then you will have no Addie; but whisper, mother,' and the girl as she spoke twined her arms round Mrs Grey's neck, and rested fondly her fair cheek against the thin, worn one of her mother's. 'Though I am going to be called away,' continued sweet Addie, 'and will have to leave you, mother, darling, still I think God will send you another little daughter in my place, for it strikes me that little Sunbeam will

yet brighten up this old Manor, and console you all for my absence.'

'What do you mean, Addie?'

'Why, that the dancing little sprite will marry either Harry or Louie; but I hope it will be Louie, for they would suit each other admirably.'

'Ah, Addie, love, it is hard to tell if things will turn out so nicely. Louie, as you know, is bent on going abroad and winning honours under a foreign flag; and Harry, I fear me, would be a very gloomy knight for little Sunbeam. I daresay,' continued Mrs Grey, 'Nina will finish her education in England, and marry over there some English gentleman, as all her mother's friends are in that country. Indeed it is hard to tell, as I have said already, Addie, love, what changes future years may bring. Besides, both Louie and Nina are very young, and then the human heart is so very wayward, that one can never count upon its likings or dislikings.'

'You are right, mother,' and as Addie

spoke she thought of the wayward hearts and wayward loves of Ernest M'Mahon, and quaint little Nan, and brave Hugh, and now, perhaps, in the near future, little Sunbeam might break the hearts of Harry and Louie, and leave them after her dancing, merry fashion, and marry some English swell.

Addie put away the thought with a sigh, and a little prayer was wafted up to heaven by the dying girl that little Sunbeam might yet take her place in the old Manor, and brighten it with her presence. There was silence for a few moments between mother and daughter, then Addie spoke again.

'Mother, I would like Nannie O'Connor to come and sit by me, and read a little while, for it's best to leave Louie at his tasks.'

'As you wish, Addie, love. Then I shall go and fetch Nan, she is never far off, and is always on the look-out to be called in,' and Mrs Grey was turning to leave when Addie called her back.

'Whisper, mother. When I go away, keep Nannie here a little while. She will help to console you all. You know what a kind little heart she has, and in her quiet way, and with her ready tact, will help to fill up the void in your hearts that my going away will be sure to make.'

'Impossible, Addie; no one can replace you. Besides, her Aunt Sarah or the squire are sure to come and carry her off one of these days. My only wonder is that they let her remain so long.'

'That's easy accounted for, mother. They know what friends Nan and I are, and do not think it worth while to separate us. Is it not strange,' continued Addie, 'I always looked upon and treated Nannie O'Connor as if she were the same age as myself, whereas little Sunbeam, I only think of her and treat her still as a laughing baby. But "talk of an angel and she'll appear," continued Addie, gaily. 'There is Sunbeam just

coming across the park with Ernest. Let them come up, mother, and Nannie and Harry and Louie can come too; they can all remain here a little while.'

So up came the little troop, and they sat some time with the dying girl. Very gently and quietly they spoke, and in a subdued, hushed kind of way, for to them sweet Addie seemed that day as if she were not clay at all, only some bright angel, and her fair face, lit up with her wondrous eyes and radiant smile, spoke to them of naught but heaven.

Harry after a little while was called away by his father, who wished to see if he had worked hard in the morning hours and written his exercises correctly.

Then Addie proposed that Nina and Louie should amuse themselves in the garden, as so many in the room would tire her out.

'But before I go I can kiss you, can't I, Addie?'

'Certainly, little Sunbeam, and twice if you wish.'

Nina put her arms round the dying girl's neck and kissed her affectionately, her bright sunny curls falling the while on sweet Addie's face, and mingling with her soft auburn hair. Then Louie and Nina, those two chums and playmates, ran hand in hand downstairs, and joined by Ponto in the garden, amused themselves as best they could, though after a very sad fashion indeed, for both were thinking of sweet Addie.

In the meantime Addie sat with Nannie and Ernest, the three chatting quietly and calmly, and yet each one knew that one amongst them would soon be called away, but they spoke as if they knew it not, and hid their feelings as bravely as they could, and so they chatted on till the time for parting came. Then as Ernest rose to go, Addie stood up, took his hand in both of hers and clasped it warmly, then she caught Nannie's, and putting the girl's little hand into that of Ernest, clasped her own over both, and so they

stood, the three clasping hands. Nannie, blushing the while, tried to draw hers away, but Addie held it firmly.

'Nay, Nan, you must not,' said the dying girl, gently, 'for I wish it so. 'Tis but a whim perhaps, a fanciful whim, and a silly one, still I wish it. Now, Ernest,' continued sweet Addie, 'when I take away my hand, leave yours still in Nannie's, just to please me—there, it is as I wish. So I hope you both one day will stand before the altar, then you will be fulfilling my dying wish, the only earthly one that has not been granted. And now, Ernest, my dear old playmate, farewell. I may not be strong enough to see you again, for my strength is failing me already. Pray for me when I am gone, but don't mourn for me with too much sorrow; 'twould grieve me to think you should. Remember my dying wish. Please me by fulfilling it. Thus you and Nan, our quaint little friend, our strange odd bit of old china, will pray for me, and think of

me together, and remember me as a dear sister gone before. Farewell, Ernest.'

A handclasp and they parted. Ernest with his heart so torn with grief that he could not trust himself to say a word. Addie with hers calm and peaceful, glad at the thought of going away, going to her heavenly home, for she was as a captive bird in its cage, wishing to be free. The time was not far off now, she knew; soon her pure spirit would take its flight to heaven.

In a few more days she left them, said good-bye, and had a special word for each in the old Manor.

Then, whilst Nannie was saying the prayers for the agonising, and the others answering and joining in as best they could, the dying girl sat suddenly upright in the bed and said quite distinctly,—

'Hark! listen to the angels singing.'

A radiant light broke over her face, she fell backwards, heaved a little sigh, and then the gentle spirit took its flight, and thus sweet Addie went away.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LADY HELEN

'I stand upon my strength, I do defy, deny,
Spurn back, and scorn ye.'

'The blessing fell upon her soul,
Her angel by her side
Knew that the hour of grace was come,
Her soul was purified.'

A WILD, dark November night, a storm of wind and thunder and rain. The lightning flashed, at times lighting up the darkness, and making the big giant trees in Lord Hamptoncourt's park look like so many phantoms. Then the thunder boomed, and the rain came down in torrents, and, with the flashing of the lightning and the thunders roar, made the whole scene—the park, the big trees, the fine stately Hamptoncourt Castle—all look weird and uncanny, and yet fascinating and grand.

As the storm raged on, the night became more fearful, the big trees swayed backwards and forwards, and some of ages standing were torn from their roots by the wild fury of the tempest and dashed to the ground. An awful night it truly was, a night to make one shudder and think of past sins, and pray for forgiveness. A night when a God's angry voice seemed mingled with the storm, calling sinners to judgment. An awful, fearful night, a night to fall down on one's knees and pray, and ask an avenging God that justice might be delayed yet a little longer, that the sinner might have a reprieve, and thus with tears and groans and mighty sorrow try and wipe out and atone for the past.

Such a night the lady Helen thought it was, as she stood at one of the three hundred windows in Hamptoncourt Castle looking out upon the storm. And as she looked she shuddered at the wild, grand scene before her, and her thoughts went back to other days—to her spoiled, way-

ward childhood; to her headstrong, self-willed girlhood; to her conquests and her triumphs in the gay world of fashion; to her elopement with Lord Hamptoncourt, accompanied by no one except by her fashionable lady's maid; then her stay with that maid in a foreign hotel, until she, poor child of fashion, and Lord Hamptoncourt were married; her stay abroad; her wanderings through many lands; the birth of her little son on the anniversary of her marriage; her return to England; their coming home to Hamptoncourt Castle; the enthusiastic reception they got from her husband's tenants; how beautiful she thought her new home, and imagined she would never grow tired of wandering through its gorgeous apartments.

Wealth and title were hers, and with her baby to play with, it seemed to the poor child of fashion that she could forget the past, and be happy in the future.

Then came ill-health and the birth of her little girl, who died a short time after.

Grief for losing the little one quite upset the Lady Helen. Already the chastising rod had fallen, already she felt its weight. Remorse had set in, and with remorse came despair. Gloomy thoughts filled her mind, religion she had long ago put aside. She had dared all for ambition, thinking, silly child of fashion, that wealth and rank and her marvellous beauty would surely bring happiness in its train, and stifle all remorse of conscience.

Then with the birth of her daughter, followed by ill-health, all the Lady Helen's beauty fled; she changed completely. Stately she was still and grand, but the soft, flashing loveliness was gone, and the marvellous beauty of the silly child of fashion was a thing of the past.

To Helen that was a new worry, a new trial. She grew whimsical and cross and gloomy, and in one of her mad, sullen moods she told her husband that she had never loved him, that she married him for his title and wealth, and nothing more. And he retorted back, telling

her that he had never loved her, that he married her for her beauty, and that now that that was gone she could betake herself and leave him if she chose, and only for their little son, he would put her out then and there, and have the gates of Hamptoncourt Castle closed against her for evermore.

'Twas a wild scene, a fearful scene between them both. Neither had religion and its softening influence to restrain them; both had given it up, and with tempest-torn, angry hearts they stood facing each other like two angry lions at bay, each fighting for the command over the other, and saying hot words, and hard words, and angry words. But when Lord Hamptoncourt taunted Helen for giving up her religion, and declared their boy would be brought up a staunch Protestant, and taken from his mother and sent to college as young as possible, then the climax was reached, and the Lady Helen with a cry of anguish turned and fled from the room.

Remorse and wild despair filled her heart from that day forth. Years passed on and still she changed not, but now, on this wild November night, as she looks out upon the storm, and listens to its mighty roaring, some hidden cords seemed stirred within her, the storm talks to her as no sermon would have done, it fills her heart with fear, it makes her shudder for her past, it seems as if it were God's voice calling on her for repentance. But how can she dare or hope for forgiveness. She who has given up her God, given up her religion, given bad example to all, even to her little son, who, as he grows up, sees how his father and mother dislike each other—what a chasm there is between them. And it is all her fault. Oh, if she had been less ambitious, less proud, less headstrong, how different would have been her fate, or even, after the first false step, if she had not given up her religion, if she had kept at least that balm in her heart, and had tried to be

a true and good wife to the man who had given her wealth and title, then perhaps he would after a time have grown to love her for her own sake, and not for her perishable beauty, and their lives might have been happy; but now—now it was too late, darkness and despair were in her heart, and raged as wildly as the storm abroad.

Remorse she could not stifle, it gnawed at and worried the heart of the poor child of fashion, and had done so for years; and yet to-night, with all her wild despair, some strange cords seemed struck in that poor weary heart, it seemed to yearn after and think of better things. Oh, if she could only hope! could only dare to fall down on her knees and pray; but impossible, impossible, so the tempter told her, she was too bad, her soul too black, her sins too many to hope for mercy now.

As Helen thought thus, standing the while at the window, and looking out at the wild storm, a little hand was

put into hers, and a childish voice said, 'Moddie, what are you thinking of?'

'Many things, darling; and see, is not the storm beautiful?'

'Yes, moddie, very grand, but it makes me half afraid. Look, look, moddie, at the lightning; the sky is lit up with it. Any danger, moddie, that the sky will go on fire if it does?' continued the child, artlessly. 'Heaven might be burned away, and where would we go to then when we would die?'

'Darling, for you in your sweet innocence heaven shall always be open, 'twill never be burned away. Oh!' continued Helen, passionately, as she took the child in her arms and kissed him, 'would that you always remained as you are now, pure and innocent, with peace in your soul.'

'Have you peace in your soul, moddie?'

'What a strange child, what a strange question! Well, my little son, I won't say that I have; but, perhaps, if you will kneel down and say a little prayer

with me, then that peace which you spoke of may come.'

Together they knelt, mother and child —the mother with her eyes cast down, the child with his fixed wonderingly on his mother's face, wondering in his baby heart why his mother asked him to pray, for she had never done so before.

Now the Lady Helen prayed aloud; prayed for mercy and forgiveness; promising to repair the past as best she could; asking that heaven's gates might not be shut against her; praying God to bless her little son, who had put that thought into her head; that heaven, if she repented not, would be as though it were burned up for her, that she would never enter there. Prayed that wild despair might leave her; that she might dare to hope for pardon; that her husband and she might be reconciled; that she might even win his love, and that both might forgive and forget the past.

As Helen prayed thus aloud for forgiveness, she had clasped her hands,

and raised her eyes towards heaven, and her little son had looked heavenwards too, and so Lord Hamptoncourt had found them as he entered the room unperceived.

He remained standing at the open door until that wild prayer, that wild cry for mercy and pardon, which came from a tempest-torn heart, was finished, then he went up to his wife, who was still kneeling, with her face now buried in her hands, and, placing his hand lightly on her shoulder, said,—

'Helen, my wife, our hearts have been long enough divided. We have both wronged each other. Let us, as you have said just now in your prayer to heaven, forgive and forget the past. Look up, my Helen, take away your hands from your face, kiss our little son, and kiss me.'

Ah, that was a joyful night, even though the storm raged on. To Helen its roaring and wild fury, and the moaning of the trees, and the thunders booming, and the falling of the heavy rain as it

fell in torrents, all now sounded like happy marriage bells, for despair had gone forth from that poor, weary, tempest-torn heart, and hope had crept in.

Was she not now reconciled to her husband? Had she not turned her heart towards her God? Ah, verily she had, and she would practise her religion, and try to be a good wife and a good mother for the future. She would teach her little son his prayers, and, in teaching him, would learn them herself, for she had well nigh forgotten them.

After a while her heart would know true peace, and even happiness perhaps might yet be hers. Peace did come to that weary heart, peace, but not much of earthly happiness yet awhile, for very soon after Helen's conversion her husband fell sick, and though he got all the care and attention that nursing and doctors could bring, still the internal malady bore him down, and notwithstanding his strong, robust constitution, carried him off after a short battle.

Then his will was opened, and it was found that he had left all his vast estates, and Hamptoncourt Castle and their house in London to his son. That the boy was to be, as he always expressed it, reared a Protestant and sent to a Protestant college the week after his death. That the Lady Helen was to have a handsome annuity, a magnificent one in fact, and a wing in Hamptoncourt Castle during her lifetime, but if she remarried she was to lose all.

So the will ran, and so it came to pass. Helen had to part with her little son, and have him no longer with her, except during his holidays. These he could pass in Hamptoncourt Castle, or elsewhere if his mother wished, but she was in no way to interfere with his religion.

Poor Helen! the chastising rod was still felt—her husband dead, her son torn from her side, and brought up in a religion alien to hers, her beauty gone, —but that was of little consequence—nothing left but wealth and rank.

What pleasure did Hamptoncourt Castle with its three hundred windows bring to her now? What pleasure her wealth, her rank? They were as naught in her eyes. Her child's character she could never mould. Her life would be a sad and lonely one. But she deserved it all, merited well the chastisement. Thank Heaven peace was in her heart anyhow, and though happiness might not be hers here below, there was another land to think of, a land that knew no sorrow, a land where the heart mourned not, nor fretted not, nor corrupted not, but where one was always happy and glad. For that bright land she would fight for henceforward, and try, by her patience and resignation here below, to win a bright crown to wear in it hereafter, in that land that knows no bitter partings, no sad farewells, and where 'the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIERY YOUTH AND THE GLOOMY KNIGHT

'Oh, 'tis the heart that magnifies this life,
Making a truth and beauty of its own.'

'NINA, would you like to hear a story?'

'Would I indeed, Louie?' Of course you know I would; I have always loved stories.'

'Well, what I am going to read for you is not exactly a story,' explained Louie, 'but it is very amusing, and claims to be true, which is more than most stories can.'

They were standing under a large apple tree in Crag garden, chums and playmates still, though boy and girl now numbered fifteen summers.

Louie looked still older. He was tall for his age, and with his dark, handsome face and formed manly ways looked fully seventeen. Nina, on the contrary, with her fair childish face, and golden curls, and playful ways, looked fully three years younger than she was.

'You must know, Sunbeam,' continued Louie, as he took a letter from his pocket and opened it, 'Harry had news from Jerry Keane this morning. Jerry often writes for his wife, as Peggie, I believe, finds letter writing, as she expresses it herself, "a hard job." Their son Paddy is after getting married, and has opened out business of his own, and now I am going to read for you a part of Jerry's description of the wedding breakfast.

'"Musha, Mr Harry, 'twas a grand sight to see, the china plates, and the forks wid shines in thim like silver, and the big dishes full ive all kinds ive things to ate, meself didn't know the names ive half ive thim. And to think that all ive that grand breakfast was for our Paddy, in honour ive his

marriage. The bride's father gave it at wan ive the big hotels, for her mother would niver know how to cook the likes; and as for meself, to tell ye the truth, Mr Harry, I hardly knew how to ate the likes.

"They gave me wan time, on a china plate, some shaky thing, and soon the shaky thing began to waddle. Meself axed Ned Doran's son, who was sitting next me, how I was to ate it,—all that family left the auld country, you know, Mr Harry, three years ago, and are now in New York, and Ned is me brother. Well, this chap, Ned's son, who pretends he knows everything, tould me I should ate it wid a fork, the ignorant boostoon. Did ye iver hear the likes, Mr Harry, ate that thing wid a fork? Sure it would jump away and make wan ashamed ive their ignorance, not to be able to get it into their mouths. I axed Paddy after in a low whisper what the quare thing was, and he sed 'twas jelly, and that the quality think a lot about it, but meself wouldn't care for the likes at all, at all. Sure wan sup ive the cratur, Mr

Harry, would be better than a dish ive it."

'That's all, Nina, that's really funny in Jerry's letter,' said Louie, as he folded it up and put it back in his pocket. Nina had been laughing whilst the boy read the extract from Jerry's epistle for her, and now, with a wise shake of her golden curls, she said quite seriously,—

'Louie, I should like to know Jerry and Peggie Keane, and their son Paddy, they have been so kind to Harry.'

Louie's brow darkened.

'Would you, Nina? Well, they were very kind,' confessed the boy, 'kinder than Harry merited. But I must tell you, Sunbeam,' continued Louie, hotly, 'that when I think of Harry's wanderings, and how he has disgraced our name and worried all our hearts by his three years' absence, and especially what an effect his going away must have had on our poor Addie's health, when I think of all this, Nina, and know and see, day after day, that you are still Harry's champion, always ready to

take up his cause, why it nearly drives me mad, my hot temper gets the better of me, and to master it, if I am indoors at the time, I have to rush out madly into the open air, and often in the park I catch strong boughs of trees and smash them in two. That appeases somewhat my mad fury. Then I think of Addie, and how it would pain her if she were on earth, and saw me in such a rage, so gradually I get calmer and calmer, and after a little while I pass into the house, and none guess what I have mastered.'

'Louie, how silly you are,' answered the girl, 'to get into such a temper. As if that could mend matters. Harry was wrong, I know,' continued Nina, 'in running away, but he is at home now and doing his best to repair the past; and you, Louie, you ought to be wiser than you are. How silly,' added little Sunbeam with a wise shake of her golden curls, 'to get into such mad fits for nothing.'

'Can I help it, Nina, can I help it?' asked the boy, passionately. 'Oh,' he

continued, fiercely striking his forehead with his closed hand, 'I wish I could, but 'tis all your fault, Sunbeam, yes, open your eyes wide as you like, 'tis all your fault, I see now 'tis jealous I am, for I love you, Nina, do you hear me? I love you, and I won't have Harry come between me and my love, I won't have you his champion, I won't have you make so much of him, and treat him as if he were a king to obey, and I only a child to play with. I won't have it, Nina,' continued the boy in the same passionate tones, 'I tell you I won't. Harry is not worthy of such esteem, of such love.'

'Is he not, Louie? And are you?' asked the girl, with a saucy toss of her sunny curls.

'I won't say I am, Nina, for I don't think anyone on earth good enough for you; but if I thought you liked me, loved me better than Harry, my hot temper would be as good as conquered, and the mad fury which seizes me at

times would pass away, for I know now 'tis all caused by jealousy. Tell me, little Sunbeam, tell me that you love me, better, at least, than Harry?'

The boy took Nina's little hand as he spoke, and she did not draw it away, she let it rest in Louie's. They had often played thus hand in hand, and to the girl Louie was but a playmate still.

'You ask me if I love you better than Harry. What a silly question, Louie. Why, Harry is a man and I can't love him as I love you. You I love very, very dearly. We have played so often together, and you have told me such a lot of nice stories. Then we have always confided to each other our little joys and sorrows, that I have come to look upon you as my brother, one to be loved, and always loved dearly, as I love Ernest; but Harry is different,' continued the girl, half hesitatingly, and blushing the while. 'You see, Louie, I can't well explain to you, but I have always sympathised with Harry, for he has

been so unfortunate, and it seemed to me he had no one to love him. As long as I can remember, he was for ever getting into scrapes, and when I was only a little mite he had my sympathy and my warm friendship. Then, perhaps, as I grew up, that warm friendship changed to love; I am sure I can't say,' continued the girl, artlessly. 'I only know, Louie, that when Harry is by, I would much prefer to please him and have him pleased than anyone else, and when he goes away my heart for a moment is a bit sad, and wishing him back again; is that love, Louie, or what do you call it?' asked the girl in the same artless tone, 'for,' she continued, 'I never think at all. To father I am still his little madcap, and to Ernest only a silly Sunbeam. I know I never worry, never bother about anything. Why should I? It does not mend matters to worry. And I would advise you, Louie,' added the girl, playfully, 'never to look so gloomy and so serious as you do this afternoon,

for it does not make you pretty. Come, put away that gloomy face, and let us take a turn in the garden.'

'Nanie, you shall drive me mad, that you will,' answered the boy, passionately, and as he spoke he caught in his fury the bough over their heads, and scarcely knowing what he did, shook it violently. Down came a shower of apple blossoms, and Nina's golden curls were covered with them.

Louie's wrath vanished like smoke, and he said laughingly, 'There, my little Sunbeam, if you only saw how pretty you look in your shower of apple blossoms. 'Oh, Sunbeam, Sunbeam,' continued the boy plaintively, 'you shall be the death of me.'

'Nonsense, Louie, I could be nothing half so dreadful,' answered Nina, as she laughingly shook off her apple blossoms. 'Come,' she continued gaily, 'let us run together and see who is the fastest, or, better still, tell me one of your nice stories, and by the way, Louie, don't have me

always the heroine. Why not for a change put in Daisy or Maudie Fitzpatrick, and then your stories might end happier.'

'Simply, Nina, because Daisy or Maudie would not be Sunbeam, and without Sunbeam in my story 'twould be a very dull story indeed, a stupid one, one I could never get through, or have the patience to tell.'

'Then put me in, Louie, as it pleases you; but tell the story anyhow.'

'Nina, I verily believe you don't know what you have done, how sore you have made my heart this afternoon,' answered the boy, passionately. 'You are but a baby, my little Sunbeam,' he continued in softer tones, 'a silly, thoughtless baby, and perhaps that's why I love you so much; but don't ask me, Nina,' continued the youth, 'for a story to-day, for if I told one, 'twould be a wild story, a story of mad love and wild fury, a story of a dancing Sunbeam and a gloomy knight, a dark, sad tale, that would make even your little dancing heart stand still, for

in that story, Nina, your shower of golden curls would turn into fire, and burn up the heart of the gloomy knight, and burn his brother's also—a youth with a fiery temper, but who loved you fondly. Then you leave them both, and go dancing away after putting their hearts on fire with your sunny curls. And as they see their little Sunbeam leaving them, and hear her merry laughter, and see her dancing, dancing on towards the golden clouds, and know that a little while longer and they shall see her no more, for their sunny Sunbeam will be mingled with the soft bright clouds, knowing this, and seeing her dancing away, leaving their poor hearts burning, they get into a mighty rage, an ungovernable fury, they call on Sunbeam, but Sunbeam returns not, so they fall upon each other in a deadly embrace, and thus they burn together. Burn, burn, and Sunbeam, when she returns next morning with the sun, can find in null part neither the gloomy knight nor the

fiery youth, she only finds a heap of ashes, so she dances upon it, and blows it to the north and south and east and west, and everywhere it falls it puts youths' and maidens' hearts on fire, and people call it Love, and wise old folk tell silly little folk to beware of it, that it only brings sorrow, and yet that love dust gets into their wise old hearts sometimes, and with all their wisdom they can't get it out; but it burns, burns, for Love is lord and master of all.'

'What a dreadful story, Louie. Who would think a little Sunbeam could do such mischief?'

'Who, indeed, Nina, and now my recreation is nearly up, and I must be going, for if I don't get to the old Manor before study hour, I shall be in the black books with old Fox; but, by the way, where is Ernest, I have not seen him to-day?'

'I heard him whistling for the dogs three hours ago, Louie, so perhaps he is gone hunting. I was at my lessons

with father at the time. How changed poor Ernest is,' continued the girl, seriously, 'how very changed; he used to be so different. You remember, Louie, how gay he was formerly?'

'Yes, Nina, I remember; but since dear Addie died Ernest is not as he was, but he is a trump all the same, a real brick is Ernest,' continued the boy, enthusiastically, 'for he never forgets to keep fresh flowers on Addie's grave, and Mr Roberts, the poor old choirmaster, brings them too.'

'That I know already,' answered Nina, 'for Ernest and I meet him sometimes at the grave. I often accompany Ernest,' went on Nina. 'Indeed I am nearly always with him; he says my lively chatter does him good.'

'I doubt not, little Sunbeam. I fear me some of the love dust has blown into his eyes, Nina.'

'Has it? Then I hope it will never blow into mine, Louie, if it changes one so much.'

'I trust it has not blown already, little Sunbeam,' answered the boy, fervently, 'for if it has, I fear me the fiery youth has little chance; and now good-bye, I must be off, but before I go I shall let you have another shower of apple blossoms.'

Boy and girl were still standing under the apple tree, and Louie, as he spoke, shook again a mighty bough, and down came a heavy shower of apple blossoms right on Nina's golden curls. The girl, with bright merry laughter, ran away, shaking her sunny locks the while. Louie for a moment stood looking after her, then, with a sigh, he turned homewards.

'You are the veritable Sunbeam of my story,' soliloquised the boy, as he walked towards the old Manor. 'There you go, laughing and shaking your curls, and my heart breaking the while. Ah, Sunbeam, Sunbeam, you have no pity on the fiery youth, you are like the Sunbeam of my story. The only difference is—the fiery youth has no gloomy knight to fight with.'

CHAPTER XV

A CONSTANT HEART

'When the shore is won at last,
Who will count the billows past?'

. . . . . .

'Together do we oft recall
This dream of other years;
Nor do I love him less to know
He once had cause for tears.'

'NANNIE, come and sit by me, I have a little lecture to give you.'

'All right, auntie. There! I have perched myself on the high stool I used to sit on when a child to study my lessons. Now, auntie, you can begin.

Aunt Sarah as usual was busy with her sewing, and Nannie O'Connor, perched on her high stool, had Ponto by

her side. Not much changed was our quaint little Nan. She had grown a little to be sure, but small she was still and fragile, yet with no trace of her old delicacy. If such ever existed, it had evidently passed away with her growing years.

'Now, Nannie,' began Aunt Sarah, 'it is just because you are no longer a child that I am going to lecture you to-day. Your father has commanded me to do so, and it comes willingly from my heart, for I think you merit it richly. So now to begin—Why are you always so distant and strange and cold in your manner to Edward O'Dwyer? You ought to know, you must know, that your father is most anxious to have him for a son-in-law. He is everything that could be desired. Then his lands are adjoining those of Oakland, his family a good old Catholic one, he himself a model young man with a first-class education, and physically a splendid fellow. As a child you seemed to like

him, but now that you have grown up to womanhood his attentions seem to have no charm for you.'

'There you are right, auntie,' put in Nannie, eagerly. 'His attentions have no charm whatsoever. I have told you over and over, Aunt Sarah,' continued the girl, 'that I shall never marry, and father knows it too. I shall be just as you are, a nice, kind old maid, and live on here quietly and calmly with you both.'

'That's nonsense, Nannie, childish nonsense, and as you are no longer a child, but a girl of three-and-twenty, it is time you should grow a little wiser. Your father, I need not tell you, is wearing fast. I am growing old, and in a few short years you may find yourself alone in this big mansion. That's why, Nannie, your father and I are so anxious to see you happily settled, with someone to care for you and love you when we are no more. Can you refuse?'

'Oh, auntie, auntie, it goes to my heart what you say, and it gives me

so much pain. Oh, please don't press me. Let me think. Give me eight days to consider, and then I shall give you my answer.'

'All right, Nannie, in eight days, my little one, we will resume the conversation. All I shall say in conclusion is—that Edward O'Dwyer proposed for you last evening, and is coming this afternoon for an answer.'

'Then let him wait, auntie, let him wait for at least another week. 'Twill grieve father if I refuse, and I know you both love me very much, and have my happiness at heart; and,' went on the girl, sadly, 'loved and cared for as I am, I ought to be very happy, and yet, auntie, on the contrary, I am very, very miserable.' The girl's face was full of anguish as she spoke, but she shed not a tear.

'Well, my little Nan, don't worry anyhow,' answered Aunt Sarah, in her calm, quiet, yet kindly way. 'I shall have matters made all right,' she con-

tinued, 'when Edward O'Dwyer calls this afternoon. Then he can call again in eight days for his answer, and if, after due consideration, you find, Nannie, that that marriage would be distasteful to you, well, then, little one, 'twill be put one side, for surely neither your father nor I would force you. Still I shall ask you, child, to remember what I said just now—that we are both anxious you should have someone to love you and care for you when we are gone.'

To that Nannie answered not a word, and there was silence for a few moments, during which Aunt Sarah seemed to ply her needle all the faster, whilst Nannie patted Ponto, then Aunt Sarah broke that silence, saying,—

'I forgot to tell you, Nannie, I had a few lines from Mrs M'Mahon this morning inquiring for your father and promising to pay us a visit to-day or to-morrow.'

'Oh, auntie, that is good news, for Nina will be sure to come.'

'Nina has a cold, Nannie, and must keep indoor, so her mother mentioned in her letter, but Mr M'Mahon or Ernest will accompany her.'

At the mention of Ernest, Nannie blushed crimson, and that Aunt Sarah might not see the heightening colour, the girl hid her face in Ponto's long shaggy mane. That good soul, her aunt, did not seem to notice, for she chatted on.

'By the way, Nannie, what a strange man Ernest M'Mahon is. He rarely goes into society; he is a real stay-at-home. People say he devours his books, as a child might a cake, but he cares for nothing else. I believe,' continued Aunt Sarah, 'the youth was greatly smitten with Addie Grey, and is inconsolable ever since. What sentimental nonsense! Why,' continued Aunt Sarah, warmly, ''tis pure selfishness to grieve like that.

Our lives were given to us to be useful, and do good to others, and not to mope with books, and shun our fellow-beings, and shut our hearts and take no interest in other people's lives. To live for self, and self alone, that's a weary living.'

Nannie let Aunt Sarah rattle on, for she could not trust herself to speak, and now that that good soul had finished, Nannie only said,—

'Auntie, my head aches to-day, I would like to take a few turns in the garden with Ponto.'

'All right, little one, and remain there till luncheon, for the morning is bright and sunny, and the fresh air will do you good.'

Nannie wanted no second bidding, she was only too glad to make her escape to the garden, glad to be away from Aunt Sarah's sharp grey eyes, glad to find herself alone. How her poor head ached to be sure, and her heart ached even more.

The morning was a soft May one, and the sun shone brightly. A sweet, tiny rivulet was always murmuring at the upper end of the garden; it passed right through it, and alongside it grew wild thyme and pretty forget-me-nots, with violets and primroses and other sweet flowers besides.

At the side of the little rivulet was a bright sunny bank shaded by laurel trees. 'Twas Nannie's favourite resort, and often she had sat there by the hour together with Ponto, reading or sewing. The murmur of the little stream, the smell of the sweet wild flowers, the calm and peace and solitude all pleased Nannie. She sought it out now, and with Ponto at her side sat for a while looking dreamingly into the little stream, and listening to its murmur, then she put her arm round Ponto's big shaggy neck, and spoke to him after her quaint old fashion.

'Dear old doggie, you ought not to look so happy, and wag your tail so

much, for your little mistress is very miserable, and therefore you ought to sympathise with her. Yes, doggie, its true, quite true, and now I shall tell you why. They want me to marry; they think 'twill bring me happiness; but, Ponto, I cannot, cannot, my heart won't let me; 'tis in somebody's keeping; but 'twas won without having been sought for, and that somebody is unhappy too, for that somebody loved another; but she died, and now he mourns for her, mourns night and day, though years have passed by since her death. Aunt Sarah says his sorrow is a selfish one, that we were born to be of use, and make others happy, and not go moping through life wrapped up in our own sorrows, and caring naught for others. That girl that that somebody loved—Ponto—and mourns for still, was a sweet girl, and we were friends and playmates, and before she died she put my hand into this somebody's, and made me keep it there, and told him

it was her dying wish to see us both united, asked him to remember it and fulfil it when she would be gone. But years have passed by since, Ponto, many years, and that somebody, though he mourns for my sweet friend, and remembers her, remembers not, or, if he remembers, fulfils not, her dying wish.'

'Nannie!'

The girl looked hastily round, and there, right at her back, stood Ernest M'Mahon. Nannie rose hurriedly, and with her face crimson the while, put out her hand for greeting. Ernest took it and kept it fast in his.

'Have you heard what I said, Ernest?' asked the girl, timidly.

'Yes, Nannie, all, or nearly all. Forgive me. I came out,' he explained, 'to call you in. Your aunt said I would be sure to find you here, and as I came along I heard you talking to Ponto. Thinking first it was silly nonsense, I stood a moment, so that I could have

a laugh at you afterwards, and as I stood I found you were talking about myself. Your words cut me through and through. I merited well the reproach for my selfishness, but still more for having forgotten sweet Addie's dying wish, or at least, remembering it, had not fulfilled it. Is it too late now, Nannie? Will you accept a heart like mine, an old tattered heart? But tattered and torn as it is, it always liked quaint little Nan in an odd, strange kind of fashion to be sure, but still it liked her, and now I think it could love her. Say, Nannie, may I dare to hope that sweet Addie's wish will be fulfilled? If so, leave your little hand in mine; if not, if there is no hope, well, then, take it away.'

They were standing by the little rivulet as Ernest spoke, and its gentle murmur sounded in Nannie's ears like some old-fashioned love song, a love song that Nannie had been wishing for, and listening for, and waiting for so long, so very

long, that her poor little heart had grown weary, and she had well nigh given up all hopes of hearing it, but now it sang in the little stream, and the birds caught up the strain and sang it too, and the girl's dancing heart joined in in the chorus; even the busy bee, as it went from flower to flower, seemed to sing the same old song.

Oh, it was a general love song, the smallest little flies were singing it, and the flowers, how sweet they smelled, and the sky, how blue it looked.

Everything seemed to rejoice at Nannie's happiness. Then why should she not rejoice herself, why not leave her little hand in Ernest's, why take away that little hand? So the little hand was left, and it told Ernest that his odd-fashioned old piece of old china, his quaint little Nan, loved him.

CHAPTER XVI

HAPPY HEARTS

'Earth sadness never shall remove
  Affections purely given,
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
  And heighten it with heaven.'

MARRIAGE bells are ringing, and Oakland Hall has not seen such a gay gathering or so bright an assembly this many a year.

Flowers and bright garlands and signs of rejoicings are everywhere. The old squire would have it so, and Nannie and Aunt Sarah were only too glad to comply with his wishes. Therefore everything was carried on on a grand scale, and everyone seemed happy, but none

more so than the little heiress of Oakland Hall herself. Indeed the squire and Aunt Sarah scarcely recognised their quaint little Nan, so changed had happiness made her.

Many friends were at the marriage, friends who had not met for years. Amongst the number was the Lady Helen, who was spending a few months in her old home, in the city by the Lee, with her boy, the youthful Lord Hamptoncourt. Her sister Emily was there also—our plain little Emily of old, now a fine, tall young girl of sixteen.

'Not so plain-looking after all,' Tim Fitzpatrick thought, when our plain little Emily passed him with a group of young girls in the garden after the wedding breakfast. 'Ladylike, by Jove! and a good, sensible girl into the bargain,' soliloquised Tim. 'Education has done wonders there. Perhaps one of these days I may be a suitor for her hand.' And Tim stroked his moustache, and

strutted on as consequentially as if he had nothing to do but pop the question and be accepted on the spot.

Tim was the same old Tim as of old, always falling in love with a new face, always 'Vacation Tim,' and always going to do wonders.

Emily's brothers, George and Fred, were also amongst the wedding guests. They were big boys now, home on their holidays. All the Fitzpatrick family were at the marriage, including our old friend Hugh, who had but just returned from India.

They were there from the old Manor also. Louie, quite a tall stripling now, a splendid fellow, with a dashing, fearless way about him, one that one should notice in a crowd.

Little Sunbeam was one of the bridesmaids, and though now 'sweet seventeen, passed off still as a child. Merry and playful as in the days of her babyhood, one of her merry pranks after the wedding breakfast was to put a garland of flowers

round Ponto's big shaggy neck, and give him a huge piece of bridescake, declaring it would be a shame if he were forgotten.

Ponto ate the cake, and seemed to find it very good, for he wagged his tail for more.

Now there is a general rush, for the bride and bridegroom are going to leave their guests behind and start on their honeymoon. Flowers and old shoes and rice are flung in heedless confusion after the happy pair. Nannie's face is radiant with joy, and Ernest looks very happy also, and thus they leave midst general rejoicings. Now the bridal carriage is seen no longer, but still the squire and Aunt Sarah linger on the doorsteps, and remain there until its sound is no longer heard, then they turn and pass into the old Hall for merrymaking with their guests.

'Thus, Helen, we have met at last, after years and years of parting. How changed you are! I would scarcely know you.'

It was Hugh Fitzpatrick who spoke. They had been somehow separated from the others during the general rush after the bridal carriage. Neither had joined in the merry throwing of rice, and old shoes and flowers, so both had found themselves stranded, as it were, alone in the midst of a merry throng, and when the gay crowd repassed them and went into the old hall, the Lady Helen and Hugh Fitzpatrick still remained standing under the old lime tree on the lawn, for the ice once broken, they found many things to say.

'Ay, changed I am, I doubt not,' answered the Lady Helen, 'changed in more ways than one. What a silly girl I was in that long ago—I mean when last we met; but, thank Heaven,' she continued fervently, 'though I have lost my beauty and my hair is turning grey, my heart now knows what true peace is; it has been purified by crosses and trials.'

'Then you are quite resigned to your lonely life, Helen?'

'Quite resigned. All are not unhappy who suffer here below, that I have learned since we parted, and, oh! a great many other things besides.'

'And I also, Helen, have learned a great many things, and I suffered too. See,' he continued, taking off his hat, 'my hair is quite white, much whiter than yours. We have both suffered, Helen,' went on Hugh, 'and both our hearts are crushed. Still why should our lives be divided? We were always meant for one another. I loved you in your sweet girlhood, Helen, for yourself, and never for your beauty. In the years that followed I crushed that love out of my heart—crushed it—but at what a price! My white hair will tell you that. But now, Helen, you are free, and have been for many years. Why should our ways be divided? Why not go hand in hand, Helen, each helping the other onward, till we both gain the goal which we are fighting for—I mean the other land, the gates of heaven? What say you, my Lady Helen?'

'But, Hugh, do you forget that I shall lose all by a second marriage—not a fraction can I bring you. If you are satisfied to take a penniless Lady Helen,' continued the once wayward child of fashion, with something of her old smile, 'then you can marry me, Hugh.'

'Not penniless, my own sweet Helen, for your dear self will be money indeed; and in worldly wealth I am rich, very rich, and if wealth and money and love can bring happiness here below you shall have it.'

And so it was arranged. They were to be married quietly, the wedding breakfast to be at Helen's old home by the Lee, then, after a short honeymoon, they would go to Hugh's estate—Peacefort—and in her new home—Peacefort House—Helen hoped to find both peace and earthly happiness.

Her boy would spend his vacations with her, and Hamptoncourt Castle—stately Hamptoncourt Castle, with its three hundred windows—was to be shut

up till the coming of age of the youthful Lord Hamptoncourt.

. . . . . .

'So, Nellie, my old friend Hugh has won you at last, and you will be the Lady Helen no longer?'

Brother and sister were in Perry's little boudoir, the blind boy cosy in his arm-chair, and Helen seated on the old low stool at his feet.

It was the day after Nannie's wedding, a rather raw September afternoon, but the bright fire burning in the little grate made the room quite warm, and the kettle hissing on the hob, with the tea-tray on the little gipsy table, and the teapot standing by, all helped to give to the little boudoir the old home look that Helen loved so well, and the years of sorrow and pain and anguish that she had lived through seemed to her, this happy September afternoon, as like some weary dream.

She could fancy she was a girl once more, but oh! so much more happy than

ever she had been in her girlhood. For there was Hugh sitting by the fire. Hugh, her betrothed, and what a happy, happy song was singing in her heart, and how bright and gay seemed everything.

'Yes, Perry, your naughty, wilful, wayward Nellie is tamed at last. Hugh has caught his wild bird, and is bringing it home to Peacefort.'

'But, Helen, my bird is no longer wild,' said Hugh, smiling. 'On the contrary, it is very tame, and very gentle, and I love it very much,—love it all the more,' continued Hugh, 'because it has suffered in its wanderings. But 'tis going to be caged now at Peacefort,' went on Hugh in the same playful strain. 'There it will be loved and cherished, and, I trust, shall suffer no more.'

'For the future I have no fear,' said Perry, brightly. 'Do you know, Nellie, I am happier to-day than I have been these years and years.'

'Well, I think you are not the only one,' put in Hugh. 'Other hearts are

light also. 'And now, Nellie,' he went on gaily, 'if you would give me a cup of tea, 'twould seem like real old times.'

So the tea was made, and as Helen was pouring it out, the youthful little Lord Hamptoncourt walked in.

Hugh took the boy on his knee and kissed him, saying, 'Well, my little lad, are you pleased with your new father? Shall we be friends? Of course,' continued Hugh, 'your mother has told you that she is going to marry me.'

'Yes, mother told me all about it this morning,' answered the boy, 'and,' he added critically, eyeing Hugh the while, 'I think you will do, and we may be friends.'

Hugh laughed. 'Thank you, my little man. Now I shall kiss again my future little son, and then he will join us in a cup of tea.'

'Will you, Harold, darling?' asked Helen.

'If you please, mother; but first allow me to serve you all,' which he did, and

acquitted himself of his task with a grace and good breeding that did not fail to strike Hugh and win his approbation.

Then when all, his mother included, had their tea, he helped himself, drank it off hurriedly, and with his mother's permission left the room.

'Harold is a fine boy,' remarked Hugh, when the lad was out of hearing, 'but he says things at times in a droll way, and after a fashion of his own. Did you remark, Helen, how his lordship said he thought I would do, as if,' went on Hugh, laughingly, 'it were a horse he was buying?'

'Yes, Hugh,' laughed Helen, 'Harold is no ordinary boy; he has plenty of character, and will, too, of his own. At Eton he is a kind of ringleader amongst the smaller boys, in every mischief and every fun. Intelligent too,' continued the mother, somewhat proudly, 'but difficult to be managed,—so the masters say anyhow.'

'All the more reason, Nellie,' answered Hugh, 'that you should marry. Thus you

will have someone to counsel you, and guide the steps of our little Lord Hamptoncourt in coming years. But here comes Tim, my dear, gossiping brother. Can you let him have a cup of tea, Nellie? And here's Emily also. Why, Emily, what a great girl you have grown! Have the kettle down again, Nellie, and we will all have a fresh cup of tea.'

So the kettle was put on, and soon it was hissing. How the steam made the lid dance to be sure, dance right merrily, and then when Helen put the kettle on the hob it sang so happily, such a bright, sweet little song, and that sweet little song it sang all the time Helen was making the tea and pouring it out, and for a long time afterwards, oh! it had a merry dancing, and a merry singing, had the kettle that bright, happy September afternoon, but though it sang a long time, never could it sing so long as the song that sang in Helen's heart, a bright, happy, peaceful song, a song that sang for evermore.

CHAPTER XVII

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE SUNBEAM

'He is dead, the beautiful youth,
The heart of honour, the tongue of truth;
He the life and light of us all,
Whose voice was blithe as a bugle call,
Whom all eyes followed with one consent,
The cheer of whose laugh and whose pleasant word
Hushed all murmurs of discontent.'

'MOTHER, please come in and see how tidy my little room is.'

'Very neat indeed, Nina; everything is in its own place. What reward does my little daughter expect for this?'

'Only a kiss, mother, and to say you are pleased. You know,' continued the girl, shaking her sunny locks, ''tis a penance for me to be tidy, my things run about so, that somehow I never can have them in their right place, they have a knack of

getting topsy turvy, but this morning I was determined it should be so no longer, and with a great deal of bustle, and singing all the time, I think I have succeeded, have I not, mother?'

'Certainly, my Sunbeam, for your room is perfection itself, and here's the kiss you asked for. Now,' continued Edith, smilingly, 'perhaps we can take a peep into the old nursery and see what it is like.'

'Oh, mother, darling, not to-day, not till late in the afternoon anyhow, for I am sure my dolls are strewn about in all directions, and carriages and perambulators and dolls' houses in wild confusion. There! I shall run up and see if I can't get the dear old room to rights.'

In a moment Nina had flown up the flight of stairs which separated her room from the nursery, then in a busy, determined little fashion, she pulled out all the drawers and set to work.

Her task was a tedious one, each dolly

had to be got into its proper place, and all the playthings packed neatly into the cupboard. Nina had all her dolls still, and would play with them, only she was afraid of getting laughed at; but they were, as of old, dear to Sunbeam's child heart, and almost as cherished by her as in the days of her babyhood.

The girl was still at her task, putting everything in order, humming all the while after her gay little fashion, when she heard a light footstep on the stairs, and in another moment Nina saw, through her cloud of golden curls, a handsome, boyish youth at the open door.

'What are you up to, little Sunbeam? Playing with your dolls? What a big baby you are.'

'Oh, Louie, please don't laugh at me, but come in. See in what a mess this old room is. Help me to put it to rights.'

'And play with dolls, Nina?'

'Louie, you are a tease; you must

know I never play with them now; but come, give me a little help, you have a knack of doing things nicely and quickly.'

Together they worked, boy and girl, and very soon the old nursery was in perfect order; then, as they turned to leave it, Louie pulled out an envelope from his pocket and handed it to Nina, saying, 'Little Sunbeam, you know I am leaving for France to-morrow, and this is a keepsake for you.'

Nina peeped into the envelope, which was not fastened, and saw inside a long, dark silken curl.

'Your hair, Louie?'

'Yes, Sunbeam, one of my curls. I kept it specially for you when mother cut them off long ago. 'Twill be a souvenir of your old chum and playmate, and remind you, Nina, of the happy days we spent together. I would ask you for one of your golden locks, my little Sunbeam,' continued the boy, sadly, 'only I dare not, dare not think of you at all.'

'And why not, Louie? Why not think of me?'

'Because, Nina,' answered the boy, hoarsely, 'I loved you, love you still too much, and I know I can never win you, you will never be mine. But put away that curl,' he added hastily, 'and let us go into the garden, for I feel choking.'

Nina put the soft silken curl carefully into her dolls' drawer, tying it first with a bit of doll's ribbon, then she ran downstairs with Louie and out into the old garden, and as they halted under the apple tree where Louie had told his story of the 'fiery youth and gloomy knight,' Nina, placing her little hand on the boy's arm, said softly and earnestly,—

'Louie, you must not think that I won't miss you, for I will. I have always loved you, and shall go on loving you to the end, loving you as the dearest of all my playthings, dearer and more cherished even than my dolls.

And that, Louie,' added Nina, playfully, 'is saying a lot, for you know how fondly I have always loved my dollies.'

'Ay, Nina, I am dearer to you than your dolls, that I can believe, but not as dear as Harry, not so loved, eh, Sunbeam?'

'Hush, Louie, don't talk of him, for it makes you always so angry. You remember,' continued Nina, trying after her bright little fashion to change the conversation, ''twas under this tree, Louie, that you told me one of your nice old stories. But that was a dreadful story,' went on the girl, half laughingly, 'that one, I mean, about the fiery youth and gloomy knight. Do tell me another, my dear old playmate, before you go away, but not like that one, Louie—a nice story, one that won't make me afraid, and that I can think of and help me to remember you whilst you are in France.'

'Dear little Sunbeam, always the same, always looking for stories, always careless

and light-hearted. Ah, Sunbeam, Sunbeam,' continued the boy, passionately, 'would I had never known you. But no, Nina,' he added hastily, 'I won't say that, for had I never known you, never met you, had my little Sunbeam never come across my path, then I would have missed one of the greatest joys of my life, for though you have brought me much sorrow, Nina, you have brought me much happiness also, and I thank you, little Sunbeam, for it, thank you for all the bright hours we spent together, and how happy you made my childhood; and now for the story, my little playmate, for surely I can't refuse.

'Once a youth and maiden stood under this apple tree. We shall call the youth "the fiery youth," for the name suits, and the maiden in our story, Nina, shall be known by the name of "little Sunbeam." Well, this fiery youth, for mischief's sake, as youth and maiden stood under the apple tree, shook one of

the heavy boughs, and down tumbled a shower of apple blossoms. They fell on little Sunbeam's golden curls, but she only laughed, shook her sunny locks, and danced away, leaving the youth alone. Then the fiery youth, weary and tired at heart, fell asleep, but even in his sleep he thought of Sunbeam.

'Now she seemed to him to be like the Sunbeam in the story of the gloomy knight, with only this difference, that her hair was full of apple blossoms, and in his dream he saw her dancing off towards the west with the sun, laughing all the while and shaking her golden curls. The fiery youth followed her, but the quicker he walked, the quicker little Sunbeam danced away. Still he could track her, for, as she went, she left a golden beam behind, and now and again he picked up an apple blossom that she had lost from her sunny locks. But at last the fiery youth lost sight of her, she got mingled somehow with a golden stream of sunny light in the west, for

the sun was just after setting. When the fiery youth came to that golden stream, Sunbeam had disappeared, but he knew she had passed that way, for he found, right on the golden stream of sunny light, a lot of apple blossoms, and these the fiery youth knew little Sunbeam had lost from her golden curls. He picked them up carefully one by one and put them tenderly into his cap, and whilst he was engaged in doing so, a bright angel stood at his side. In his hand the angel had a casket filled with bright red roses, delicious roses, somewhat like the roses, Nina, on my old rose tree at home.

'"You are looking for little Sunbeam," said the angel to the fiery youth, and as the angel spoke he smiled. "There!" continued the angel, "you have picked up all your apple blossoms. If you wish to find little Sunbeam come with me." And the angel touched the shoulders of the fiery youth, and behold the fiery youth had two big wings, not so large, or so

white, or so beautiful as the angel's, but still large enough to fly with. So they flew away together. They passed the fleecy golden clouds ; they passed the deep blue sky ; they went into realms that the fiery youth knew not, had never dreamt of even in his dreams ; they flew on and on, through unknown space, and now, as they flew higher and higher, distant singing broke upon their ears, and from some far-off place came, wafted with the wind, the perfume of sweet flowers. At last the singing grew quite distinct, and now they could see golden gates, and through the chinks of its golden bars what seemed a sea of blue and gold.

'The angel flew up to the gates, and said to the two great white angels with fiery swords who were on guard, "Open the gates just a little, and let this fiery youth get a glimpse of the Court of Heaven." And behold the gates were opened, and the singing grew louder and louder. Sometimes it died away like an

æolian harp, and then it broke forth again like the peal of a mighty organ. The angel now beckoned to the fiery youth to stand, and look in. The youth gave one glance, and then he hid his face behind the angel's great white wings, for the sight had dazzled him, he dare not look any longer, but what he saw in that hasty glance was to be remembered a lifetime.

'He saw through a golden cloud white angels passing and repassing the "Great White Throne." They were singing all the time, and had harps and other musical instruments in their hands, and as they played and sang they scattered beautiful flowers, not earthly flowers though, but such as grow in Paradise. Sweet incense filled the air. The youth wished to look again at the "Great White Throne," but he dared not, the sight was too dazzling, too surpassingly fair for human eyes, so he kept his face behind the angel's great white wings. Then the gates were shut, and he saw no more, but angels passed

and repassed him constantly. Some came flying up from earth, and some were flying down. The latter had caskets in their hands filled with crosses and thorns, but through the crosses and the thorns the fiery youth could see bright rays of light. The angels that were coming up from earth had, many of them, golden caskets in their hands filled with jewels and bright earthly flowers.

'The fiery youth asked his good angel the meaning of the caskets, and the angel answered, "Those angels that you see flying down to earth are bringing thorns and crosses to many lives, and the bright rays of light are the graces they will receive, for God never trys a human soul beyond its strength, and the jewels in the golden caskets of the angels who are flying up are the graces well corresponded with, the crosses borne with patience, the thorns with resignation, and the sweet earthly flowers are the different human passions overcome. See, I have some for

you," continued the good angel to the fiery youth, showing him the beautiful red roses. "These I shall make into crowns for you, and put them in your place in heaven, for everyone, you must know, has a place marked out there, but to gain it one must fight for it."

'"But what have I done," asked the fiery youth, in astonishment, "to merit these beautiful roses?"

'"Ah! do you forget, fiery youth," answered the good angel, smiling, "how many times you have curbed that fiery temper of yours, how many times put it under subjection? For each time that you have done so, you have earned one of these beautiful roses. See what a quantity you have won, and they will never fade," continued the good angel, "never wither, and when you will die you shall find them fresh, just as they are now, and beautiful. And now, fiery youth, you may descend to earth with your apple blossoms; but that reminds me, I promised to show you Sunbeam! Hush! she is coming. Look!"

'The fiery youth looked as the angel directed, and behold, he saw a crowd of white angels flying up from earth. A beautiful girl was in their midst. He recognised her at once by her sunny locks. 'Twas little Sunbeam. But she passed on and never seemed to see him, on through the great golden gates, for they were opened wide for her. The crowd of angels passed in also, singing all the time, then the great big golden gates shut with a bang, or rather a clap like thunder, and the fiery youth saw no more of Sunbeam. In his fright, thinking she was shut out from him for years and years, perhaps for ever, he screamed. The scream awoke him, and then the fiery youth found 'twas all a dream, he was lying under the apple tree, and little Sunbeam was not dead after all.

'There's my story ended, Nina. 'Twas a long one, and I hope you liked it. To tell you the truth, my little Sunbeam,' continued the boy in a choking voice, ''twas no story at all, but a dream I had myself a few nights ago. I told it after a story fashion

to please you. And now, Nina, I must be going, mother will wonder what kept me so long. Besides,' added the youth, hoarsely, 'I dare not trust myself to say more. Good-bye, little playmate. Good-bye, my little Sunbeam. Good-bye, and God bless you.'

He caught her hand in his, took one of her sunny locks, kissed it, and was gone.

. . . . . .

'And Louie went away this morning, Harry?'

'Yes, Sunbeam, are you very lonely without him?'

'What if I were, Harry?' answered Nina, blushing. 'Nothing strange in feeling lonely after an old chum and playmate, is there?'

'Well, I suppose not, Sunbeam; but—who is first on your list of favourites, Louie or I?'

'Ah, Harry,' answered Nina, laughingly, 'you must know I keep no list now; that baby fashion was put one side with my dolls and my babyhood.'

'Well, Nina, let us suppose you still

keep your list of favourites. Come, who's first on it?'

'Mr Curious, I won't tell you,' answered Nina, with her old-wise shake of her golden curls, 'for,' she added, 'it might make you too proud.'

'Oh, you silly little Sunbeam, you think I don't guess, do you? Why of course I do. I guessed it all along. I am first, and ever have been first on your baby list. And you —you have been precious to me, Nina, since you were a tiny little dot, just able to toddle. And now,' continued Harry, 'I have something to tell my little Sunbeam that may surprise her. It is this—that I am going to pop the question.'

'Oh, Harry, what do you mean?'

'Simply, Nina, that I am going to propose for you formally to-day.'

'Oh, please don't, Harry, it frightens me, for I have an idea that mother will raise objections. Somehow you were never a favourite with her.'

'That I know. Louie was her pet, Nina, but Louie was not yours, and that makes

all the difference. If your mother,' continued Harry, 'was once won over, then my course would be clear, for I expect no difficulty with your father.'

'There you are right, Harry. Whatever his little Sunbeam wishes is law with father.'

'Then my cause is half won, Nina. But,' continued Harry, hesitatingly, 'suppose I fail, suppose your mother won't consent, what will my little Sunbeam say?'

'That I shall never go against my parents' wishes, Harry. But at the same time,' continued the girl, resolutely, 'if I can't marry you, if mother won't have it, then I shall never marry at all.'

'You are a trump, Nina, a real brick, and ever were, ever since the day you gave me your two golden sovereigns. By the way, Nina, did I return them?'

'Certainly, Harry. Don't you remember my last birthday? Louie brought them over. You had put them in an envelope, addressed outside, "For Sunbeam." I

wonder,' continued the girl laughingly, 'if by chance Louie lost that envelope, would the finder discover who "Sunbeam" was?'

'No doubt about it, Nina. One look at your sunny, golden curls would tell, let the finder be as dull as a Dutchman.'

'Poor Louie,' sighed Nina, 'how I shall miss him my next birthday. But tell me, Harry,' continued she, earnestly, 'why did he take that strange notion of finishing his education in France?'

'Nothing strange at all, Nina. Louie, you must know, always had a wish to fight under a foreign flag, and after all, the French flag is not a foreign one for us, as my great-grandfather on mother's side was French, and you know we have an aunt still living in Paris, besides many cousins and friends, so Louie will be quite at home in the French capital. And father,' continued Harry, 'quite agreed with Louie, that it would be wise to spend some time in a French college,

and thus acquire a perfect knowledge of that language before joining the French army.'

'But he will come home for his summer holidays, Harry?'

'I think not, Nina. Louie has a wish to spend them with his aunt and cousins. Indeed I think he has no notion of returning to the old Manor this many a day, for I heard him saying to mother that both she and father should go over from time to time to see him, and he whispered to mother this morning, as he bade her good-bye in the hall, and her tears were falling fast, to be of good cheer, that he thought a little Sunbeam would soon come to brighten the old Manor, and mother's answer was, "God grant it, Louie. Our sweet Addie said the same years ago." Then she kissed him, and he went away accompanied by father. And now, Nina,' continued Harry, 'I must be off to plead my cause. Heaven grant I may be successful. If I am, I shall return and tell you; if not, I shall go away without

a word. Good-bye, my little Sunbeam. Come what will, we shall be true to each other.'

Nina recommenced her music which Harry had interrupted some time before, and interrupted in a somewhat unceremonious way, by jumping in through the open window of the morning parlour where the girl was practising. Uncouth and uncivilised in many ways was Harry Grey. The girl now took up again her practising, and though she played on longer than usual that afternoon, a full half-hour at least, Harry returned not. Then Nina knew there was no hope, but her resolve was taken—she would never marry other than Harry Grey.

Harry had formally proposed for Nina and was as formally rejected. Edith could not think of such a thing.

'What, marry her bright little Sunbeam, her dancing, laughing, merry-hearted child, to such a gloomy knight, a knight with a a dark spot on his past, one who had

nothing to recommend him, except that he was brother to sweet Addie and brave Louie, and son to gentle Mrs Grey.'

So the gloomy knight—as his mother often playfully called him—had to return home to the old Manor with hope dead within his gloomy heart; but he had one consolation anyhow, if Nina would never marry him, she never would marry anyone else.

Harry told his mother on his return of his proposal and failure. For gentle Mrs Grey that failure was a sore disappointment. Then her sweet Addie was mistaken after all, and yet had not Louie repeated the same hope that very morning. Oh, she would hope on. Sunbeam was just the little wife that Harry wanted. Her bright sunny nature, and laughing ways and gay companionship would make the naturally gloomy heart of her wayward boy happy, and the little dancing fairy would brighten all their lives, and the old Manor into the bargain, and

Heaven knew it, and everyone in it wanted a brightening. Oh, yes, the poor mother would hope on, and pray on, and surely Heaven would not refuse a mother's prayers and tears.

. . . . . .

Three years passed away. Nina spent the greater part of that time in England with her mother's friends, but her heart remained faithful and true, nothing would change it, and Edith saw with displeasure that Harry was as dear as ever.

Then a great cloud of sorrow burst over the old Manor. Louie, the brave, the bright, the beautiful, Louie, a mother's love and a father's pride, Louie, the playmate and chum of little Sunbeam, was no more.

He had completed his twenty-first birthday and was to leave college for good in a few months, when scarlatina in a bad type broke out. It made great havoc amongst the boys, and Louie was one of the first to succumb.

The old major, who went over with

Harry for the funeral, got a beautiful account of the boy's death from the fathers of the college.

First he battled bravely against his sickness, and was on the convalescent list, and quite out of danger, the doctors thought, when he got a relapse, and succumbed in a day or two. He was conscious nearly all the time, and prepared and resigned to die. But at times he raved a little, and then his thoughts went wandering on strange things, red roses, and golden caskets and bright angels, and the setting sun, and apple blossoms, and someone called Sunbeam, and a fiery youth, and a gloomy knight, all seemed mixed up together in the boy's brain.

Just before he died, he did not rave at all; he was quite conscious, and prepared with a serious holy gravity for the end which he knew was near, and then he died—died with prayers on his lips, and a happy smile on his youthful, handsome face. He had been known in

college by the name of 'St Louie' amongst the boys, so good had he seemed to them, so much did he keep his temper under control, and saintly was the expression on the sweet young face in death, and deeply was he mourned for by his comrades, for a great favourite was he amongst the students, and in the college there was not one so loved, or one thought more of than 'St Louie.'

He was buried in his aunt's grand family vault in Paris, and so rested on French soil, and near his college chums, who loved him so well. Deep mourning fell on the old Manor, and that dark cloud of sorrow would remain for many a day.

Edith M'Mahon lost no time in going to console and sympathise with gentle Mrs Gray. She brought Nina with her. Indeed the girl insisted on it. She should see Mrs Gray, she declared, and kiss her for Louie.

Hidden away in little Sunbeam's pocket was a long silken curl. 'Twas a cherished keepsake now, a reminder of days and

times that could never come again—a link of the past, a link which belonged to her babyhood and childhood, and reminded her of a little playmate she never more would see here below, and though that long, dark silken curl was his parting keepsake, still she would resign her treasure and give it to the heartbroken mother, so that dear link of the past was now hidden away in little Sunbeam's pocket on her departure for the old Manor.

It was a bright spring day, but Nina could see no brightness in the laughing sunshine, and she sat quietly by her mother's side without a word to say.

As the carriage rolled away from Crag Castle down by the old beech avenue, Edith remarked Nina's unusual silence, and what a grieved look was on the little face which was usually so bright and gay. Then Edith's thoughts travelled back to little Sunbeam's merry-hearted dancing childhood, and it seemed as if it were only yesterday she saw her little Sunbeam

dancing hither and thither through fallen leaves, daring Ernest and Harry to overtake her with theirs.

Edith remembers well that bright sunny picture, and her child's merry laughter on that autumn forenoon, then she turns from that life picture of the past, with a sigh and a wish that Harry Grey had never crossed the life path of her little Sunbeam.

It did not take long to get to the old Manor, and during the short drive Nina said scarcely a word, for her thoughts were with the past.

The girl grieved really and truly for her old playmate, and her sympathy was very sweet to poor heartbroken Mrs Grey, who, with a mother's instinct, guessed how much her Louie loved his little Sunbeam.

Did he not rave about her and the angels during his last illness? And henceforward bright, dancing, merry-hearted Nina would be more loved and cherished than ever.

So the poor mother told Edith M'Mahon during that condolence visit. And all the time she kept little Sunbeam's hand in hers, and would not let it go. Then, towards the close, she whispered in Edith's ear sweet Addie's wish, and her brave Louie's wish, and Harry's wish and her own; and with streaming eyes, and her hand still clasped in Nina's, begged Edith to grant it. And little Sunbeam, her face blushing the while, and her great blue eyes filled with tears, joined timidly and yet earnestly in that poor mother's prayer.

Edith, though somewhat cold and distant in her ways, had a heart kind and true, a heart which was not proof against a mother's and a child's prayers and tears, so she was won over at last, and though reluctantly, yet reluctantly all the same, the promise was given—the gloomy knight and bright, dancing little Sunbeam, with her golden, sunny cloud of curls, would be married.

CHAPTER XVIII

NINA'S 'HAULING HOME'

'Bring flowers, fresh flowers for the bride to wear,
They were born to blush in her shining hair.
She is leaving the house of her childish mirth,
She hath bid farewell to her father's hearth,
Her place is now by another's side—
Bring flowers for the locks of the fair young bride.'

MORE than a twelvemonth has passed away since Louie's death.

The sweet month of June has come—the month of roses, just such another June as when our story opened seventeen years ago.

The old Manor is looking at its best, flowers are blooming everywhere, and birds are singing, and all hearts are glad, for to-day is 'the hauling home.'

The old Manor is to welcome a new mistress. Nina is returning from her

honeymoon and going to take up her residence within its gloomy walls.

Major Grey's tenants and Arthur M'Mahon's are all invited to join in the rejoicings, and welcome the sweet young bride to her new home.

Grand preparations have been made; there are garlands and flowers and triumphal arches everywhere. A huge tent has been erected on the lawn, and its long table is laden with all kinds of refreshments. Then, piled on one side, can be seen good substantial wearing apparel, comprising shawls, blankets and many other cosy things, all to be given to the poorer tenants on the estates; and when receiving them, each one will receive also a few bright words and a sweet smile from little Sunbeam.

All our friends are at the 'hauling home.'

Hugh and Helen are there with their pretty little daughter, Miss Nell Fitzpatrick. Hugh declares the little one is the picture of her mother, beautiful

as Helen had ever been in her early youth, but Helen hopes that, by judicious training, her little Nell will never be like her, spoiled and wilful.

The youthful Lord Hamptoncourt is also there. He is growing up a fine manly fellow, but still difficult to manage.

Perry is living in Peacefort now, happy and bright and contented, and little Nell often trots into his room and amuses him with her childish chatter.

Tim Fitzpatrick, our old gossiping Tim, is amongst the guests at Nina's 'hauling home.' Tim has at last taken out his degrees and is a practising doctor now; and Emily is there with an engagement ring on, for our dear plain little Emily is to be married the following month to a dashing young officer, a friend of Hugh's. Hugh sold out his commission and has retired altogether from the army.

Ernest and our quaint little Nan are also at the old Manor this afternoon with their children, Lilian and sturdy little Jack, and the old squire and Aunt

Sarah are there, and so are Edith and Arthur M'Mahon, and many other friends besides too numerous to mention.

Now there is a general stampede amongst the tenants and guests, for the bridal carriage is coming. Cheers rend the air, hats are thrown up, and handkerchiefs waved. There is a general rush, the carriage stops, Nina steps down and then flies hither and thither like the dancing little Sunbeam of old, receiving congratulations on all sides, which she acknowledges with bright smiles and hearty handshaking and pleasant words, her face radiant with joy the while, and her little heart dancing, dancing as even that bright, merry little heart never danced before.

Everyone was happy, all enjoyed themselves, all rejoiced at Nina's 'hauling home,' and so the happy hours sped on, and then the tenants left one by one, till all were gone from the old Manor except the guests.

Evening was now stealing on, but

still the sun shone brightly, so the party lingered out of doors. Chairs were brought and tea was served under one of the big trees on the lawn. Gentle Mrs Grey was there pouring it out, and the stiff old major was at her side. Both looked happy and contented, though on each of their faces, albeit in a different fashion, one could read that sorrow and anguish had visited them both, and that each had known crosses and trials.

At the major's other side was little Sunbeam. She would replace now his sweet Addie, and cheer him and gentle Mrs Grey in their old age. Seated on the grass was the youthful Lord Hampton-court. Very busy he seemed, stringing a daisy chain for little Lilian M'Mahon, and pretty Nell and sturdy Jack seemed good friends too.

'Now, Sunbeam,' said Ernest in his quizzing way, 'you must not suppose that because you are married you can become sedate and serious. On the contrary, you are ever to remain a veri-

table sunbeam, dancing here and there, coming often, and bringing to each of our homes some of your sunny sunshine.'

Nina laughed, but before she had time to reply, Tim the chatterbox put in,—

'I say, hear, hear, Ernest, for none of us could part with Sunbeam. And I trust,' he added, with an air of consequence, 'when I am married, Sunbeam will favour my wife with a visit, and bring with her some of her bright dancing sunshine.'

'I fear me that time is a long while off, Tim,' laughed Nina. 'I mean,' she added laughingly, 'before you are settled down and have a wife, for see, all your sweethearts are married. Emily is the last, and she is engaged.'

'By Jove! you are right, Nina. Well, there's Lilian, a sweet babe; I can wait for her.'

There was now a general laugh at Tim's expense, and then Ernest continued with his quizzing.

'I say, Sunbeam, have you got all your dolls yet?'

'What an old tease you are, Ernest. Well, yes, I have got all my dollies; but now that I am married I suppose I must give them away.'

'Then I claim the one with the punched nose and broken leg,' put in Ernest, laughingly. 'You remember, Sunbeam, the one you got into such a temper over long ago?'

'And I tell you you sha'n't have it, Mr Tease,' said Nina, gaily. 'That precious dolly I shall give to Lilian.'

'Me don't want it,' answered that little lady, looking up with quite an offended air. 'Me don't want a dolly with a punched nose.'

At that sally there was a general laugh, and whilst everyone was still laughing, Nina, in her old, bright, sparkling way turned to Harry, saying gaily,—

'Will you have my dolly, Harry?'

'No, Nina, thank you,' answered her husband — our gloomy knight—tenderly and laughingly. 'I don't want any dolls, not even that precious dolly with the

punched nose, for I have won my little Sunbeam — the brightest, fairest, little dolly in all dolly-land—and that is all I want.'

And now we shall say good-bye. Good-bye to the old Manor and Crag Castle; to Hugh and the once haughty Helen; to Ernest and our quaint little Nan; to the stiff old major and gentle Mrs Grey; to Arthur and Edith M'Mahon; to gossiping Tim, and happy, contented Perry; to the old squire and dear Aunt Sarah; to our gloomy knight and his dear, faithful, warm-hearted little Sunbeam — Sunbeam with her bright, sunny ways and child heart, and her cloud of golden hair. Good-bye to our dear little Sunbeam. Good-bye, good-bye to you all, and may your lives be full of peace.

THE END

Colston & Coy. Ltd., Printers, Edinburgh

DIGBY, LONG & CO.'S
SUPPLEMENTARY LIST

IN ONE VOLUME, Cloth, Gilt, Price 6s.

Anne Judge, Spinster. By F. W. ROBINSON.
Author of 'Grandmother's Money,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Cheap and Second Edition.*

Athenæum.—'Mr Robinson's reputation as a novel writer will not be diminished by the present work. It gives us remarkable pleasure to be able to speak of a novel in terms of praise. . . . We cherish the appearance of this book with satisfaction. We must specially mention the hero as being uncommonly well drawn, for he is both original, natural and interesting. Altogether we commend this book to the public.'

A Crazy Moment. By SARAH TYTLER.
Author of 'Citoyenne Jacqueline,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Manchester Guardian.—'"A Crazy Moment" is one of the best of Miss Sarah Tytler's stories. The author interests her readers at once in Lily Ashe, an unhappy woman who has been disappointed of a longed-for child. Throughout the tale the spectators watch the dragging ships of Nemesis till the crisis is reached. Miss Tytler treats this difficult situation with skill.'

The Yellow Badge. By JEAN MIDDLEMASS.
Author of 'A Girl in a Thousand,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Literary World says:—'Miss Middlemass's Novels are always popular, and her latest is as well written as usual.'

Public Opinion.—'"The Yellow Badge" shows the hand of a skilled writer. The story is worthy of the author's reputation, and should be widely read.'

The Desire of Men. By L. T. MEADE.
Author of 'The Medicine Lady,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Fourth Edition.*

St James's Budget.—'"The Desire of Men" is not the sort of book to read on a wild winter's night when one is alone in the house. It has to do with a species of human vampire; its leading idea is the possibility of old age staving off death by preying on the vitality of youth. It would be a crime to spoil the treat which awaits lovers of the supernatural and uncanny in Mrs Meade's pages.'

Liverpool Courier.—'The story is an awfully weird one, and despite its undoubted creepiness it possesses a strong fascination, which holds the reader until the climax is reached.'

The Red-Headed Man. By FERGUS HUME.
Author of 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Third Edition.*

World.—'"The Red-Headed Man" is perhaps the best piece of work that Mr Fergus Hume has given us since he wrote "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab." In it he shows more than his wonted skill in the unravelling of a mystery which is unusually complex. . . . Brightly and smartly written, Mr Fergus Hume's tale contains not a single dull chapter.'

Tempest-Tossed. By M. E. WINCHESTER.
Author of 'Little King Rannie,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Just out.*

Western Daily Mercury.—'One of the few books it is worth anyone's time to read and read carefully. From beginning to end the book is of absorbing interest, and can be thoroughly and heartily commended to the reading public.'

Angel: A Cornish Romance. By Mrs ENSELL.
Author of 'Lanherst,' 'The Pearl of Lisnadon,' &c.

Black and White.—'Mrs Ensell can write a story which has the simplest of plots, but which nevertheless is a pleasure to read on account of her manner of telling her story. "Angel" is a romance of Cornwall, and is written in the simplest manner—a manner which is quite the best for the story Mrs Ensell tells. She has a keen sense of the beauties of Nature, and a skilful pen in describing them. "Angel" is an interesting tale, written in a quiet, pleasant style.'

Storm and Strife. By JEAN MIDDLEMASS.
Author of 'A Girl in a Thousand,' &c.—*Second Edition.*

Globe.—'Miss Jean Middlemass has for a long time enjoyed a steady popularity among novel readers and we can heartily commend what we take to be her latest effort. "In Storm and Strife" is in truth an excellent story, the action never flagging, and the characters being clearly and intelligently outlined.'

The Chains of Circumstance. By T. W. SPEIGHT.
Author of 'The Mysteries of Hern Dyke,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Irish Times.—'A good novel, artfully flavoured, well worked out and attractively written, the book will be found pleasing and entertaining.'

A Buried Mystery. By CLEMENT A. MENDHAM.
Author of 'A Troth of Tears,' &c.

Daily Telegraph.—'In Mr Clement A. Mendham's new book, "A Buried Mystery," he gives us a most weird romance and the story of the discovery of a strange people with strange customs in a new country. It is sufficient to say that Mr Mendham's imagination is almost overpowering in its ingenuity

The Lost Laird. By J. E. MUDDOCK.
Author of 'For God and the Czar,' 'Stripped of the Tinsel,' 'Without Faith or Fear,' &c.—*Second Edition.*

Daily Chronicle.—'Mr Muddock has caught the spirit and temper of the times with success. His story is well laid and simply told, while among the characters we note as especially good in delineation are Janet Ogilvie and Kenneth Graham, the faithful servitors of the laird—Jamee Fraser.'

Where the Ways Part. By BERTHA M. M. MINIKEN.
Author of 'An English Wife,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Birmingham Daily Gazette.—'A volume that will afford infinite pleasure to girls. As in Miss Miniken's other novels, the story is told with much feeling. The book is one we can cordially recommend.'

The Loyal Hussar. By ALAN ST AUBYN.
Author of 'A Fellow of Trinity,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Scotsman.—'The stories are all brightly and pleasingly written. . . . Several of them are descriptive incidents connected with the South African War. The stories are handled with a freshness and vivacity of which warrant us in describing this as a charming volume.'

Greek Peasant Stories. By NEIL WYNN WILLIAMS.
Author of 'The Bayonet that Came Home,' 'The Green Field,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Literature.—'Mr Neil Wynn Williams's collection of Greek Peasant Stories are, taken individually, artistic little sketches. Their chief interest lies in the delineation of the character of the modern Greek. The stories make pleasant reading.'

Literary World.—'These are all short, first impressionist sketches, each describing some brief episode in peasant life. The sketches are all interesting, some remarkably vivid, as, for example, "The Abduction," "Strong Spiro," the "Jews' Granary."'

Speaker.—'Mr Neil Wynn Williams has collected his dainty little Greek Peasant Stories and made a very readable volume of them. He has written a book that pleases, like the narrative of an honest traveller, and in which one thing at least, the "Notes from the Countryside, Greece," is a bit of description that deserves to become classical.'

Her Promise True. By DORA RUSSELL.
Author of 'Footprints in the Snow,' &c.—*Second Edition.*

Western Mercury.—'"Her Promise True" does justice to her high reputation, and will sustain the interest of all who read the book. The plot is well thought out, and the story of its development is told with a dramatic skill of which Miss Dora Russell's facile pen seems to have such free command. The work is admirably constructed, and the result is a novel that will be read with unflagging interest from beginning to end.'

Flora Macdonald. By J. GORDON PHILLIPS.
Author of 'James Macpherson,' 'The Laird's Wooing,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

British Weekly.—'There is in this book abundance of stirring incidents. Indeed, almost every chapter ends with an effective tableau. We heartily commend the tale. It will prove delightful to boys, and indeed to all robust minds.'

Adventures of Rosalie Stuart. By W. SHAW.
Author of 'Golden Dreams and Waking Realities,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Daily Chronicle.—'There is a fund of entertainment in this rattling story. We must frankly own it has merit, being rich in ingenious incidents, and racy with the flavour of rural England at the time.'

The Kestyns of Cather Castle. By Roby F. Eldridge. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Sheffield Telegraph.—'A very clever book, exhibiting a striking vein of originality with several strongly-marked characters, vigorously drawn.'

My Yarns of Sea Foam and Gold Dust. By Capt. Charles Clark. Author of 'The Story of an Ocean Tramp,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Speaker.—'We can heartily recommend "My Yarns of Sea Foam" to all who like a genuine story of the sae.'

Edgar's Ransom. By C. Rysbridge. Cloth, 6s.

Belfast News Letter.—'A well written and well worked out story.'

Under the Linden. By Gillan Vase. Author of 'A Great Mystery Solved,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Aberdeen Press.—'A good, high-toned, fascinating story. It excites an interest which never flags from beginning to end. Its flow is easy and natural, but withal so captivating that not a page can be skipped, nor the book laid down until the end is reached.'

The Secret of Mark Pepys. By F. J. Proctor. Author of 'Timothy Twill's Secret,' &c. With Illustrations by the Author. Cloth, 6s.

Scotsman.—'This is a story of love and adventure in a troubled region of Mexico during the troubled period immediately before the American annexation of California. The story is strongly constructed, and possesses the merit of being written in a vigorous and picturesque style.'

The Prince's Feathers. By Mrs Leith-Adams (Mrs H. De Courcy Laffan). Author of 'Accessory after the Fact.' Cloth, 6s.

Birmingham Gazette.—'Is one of the most charming stories we have seen of late; a pastoral idyll in prose, so romantic is the tale, so artistic the setting, and so graceful and poetic the style in which it is written.'

Liverpool Mercury.—'The graceful pen of the accomplished authoress here gives us a very pleasantly written romance. It tells of a village beauty who was wooed and won by a court gallant; and in its course rural England as it was in the days of the Georges is described in picturesque and graphic fashion. Those who enjoy a thoroughly well-written story will do well to get "The Prince's Feathers."'

Many Waters. By K. Rhodes. Cloth, 6s.

Western Mercury.—'A story of originality which will rank amongst the best love novels of the season. Abounding in incident and quiet movement, the interest of the reader is never allowed to flag, while the delineation of the central figures is cleverly and realistically drawn. . . . A powerful piece of writing.'

Angels Unawares. By E. Blackmore. Cloth, 6s.

St James's Budget.—'Those who like sensational stories with a good tone about them will enjoy reading this book.'

A Torn-Out Page. By DORA RUSSELL.
Author of 'Her Promise True,' &c. Cloth, 6s.—*Third Edition.*

Glasgow Herald. — 'Miss Russell's latest story is cleverly thought out and planned. . . . The scenes are distinctly clever. It is seldom we come across a book which is at once so healthy and exciting as this.'

A Roman Mystery. By RICHARD BAGOT.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Third Edition now ready.*

Bookseller.—'A noteworthy novel, and one that will be in great demand.'

Spectator.—'Mr Bagot has given us a most interesting book. . . . The romance of the tale grows out of the terrible curse attaching to the family of the Montalupi, a princely race liable to a gruesome form of epilepsy in which the sufferer simulates the gait and voice of a wolf. The portraiture is often excellent, and the author's intimate knowledge of Italian society is manifested at every turn.'

The Mystery of Monkswood. By Mrs LODGE.
Author of 'The Mystery of Bloomsbury Crescent,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Daily Telegraph.—'A story which is unquestionably fraught with sustained interest from its first page to its last. Its heroine, Mona Wilford, is a really charming girl. . . . We must refer our readers to the text of Mrs Lodge's graphic and indisputably engrossing romance.'

A Treble Soloist. By HARLEY RODNEY.
Author of 'Hilda,' 'Horatio.' Cloth, 6s.

Bookseller.—'The story of the boy hero and his varied adventures is well told.'

Lady.—'A most amusing story, very smartly written, in a crisp, bright style.'

The World's Old Story. By F. SCOTT.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Western Mercury.—'The story is exceedingly well told, the authoress having a fluent diction and an attractive style.'

A Comedy of the Cloth. By T. A. LEWIS. Cloth, 6s.

Literary World.—'The leading though unconscious creator of the genuine comedy which runs through the pages of this book is an ascetic young clergyman, who is still vulnerable on one side of his character—the amatory side. The fun in this book is real fun. It is not profane or vulgar, as it might easily have become in less skilful hands.'

In the King's Favour. By J. E. MUDDOCK.
Author of 'For God and the Czar,' 'Stripped of the Tinsel,' 'Without Faith or Fear,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

St James's Budget.—'Mr Muddock's story is brightly and clearly told, and the spirit of the period dealt with has been reproduced in admirable fashion. Lovers of the historical novel will do well to get "In the King's Favour."'

Little King Rannie. By M. E. WINCHESTER.
Author of 'A Nest of Skylarks,' 'Tempest-Tossed,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Liverpool Daily Mercury.—'The tale runs very pleasantly, with abundance of those happy touches of child-life which made "The Nests of Skylarks" so charming a production.'

Fettered by Fate. By G. W. MILLER.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

World.—'Those who like a novel which stirs within them pleasant reminiscences will like this book, for they will be reminded of plays and novels . . . notably the works of Mr Charles Reade.'

Some Fantasies of Fate. By M. W. WELBORE.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Athenæum.—'Most of these stories are characterised by sensational incidents, and in one entitled "The Deserted Mill" there is more than average merit.'

Hoya Corney. By Mrs BERTRAM TANQUERAY.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Daily Telegraph.—'The portions of the story dealing with Fenland life are well and graphically written, and the hysterical and melodramatic figure of Hagar is vigorously drawn.'

Bookseller.—'Mrs Tanqueray has made a decided hit in "Hoya Corney"—an original and cleverly told tale.'

Beyond these Dreams. By G. BERESFORD FITZGERALD.
Author of 'The Stigma,' &c. Cloth, 6s.

Public Opinion.—'A work of considerable originality.'

Literary World.—'A very human tale, graphically told.'

Liverpool Post.—'A very powerful story. . . . It is the history of a lovely woman and her emotions.'

Court Journal.—'Is well worth reading.'

A Brace of Yarns. By W. BRAUNSTON JONES.
Author of 'Mithazan,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Scotsman.—'There is in the stories a certain breezy spice of adventure that maintains the interest of the reader. They should find many readers among the class which loves sea yarns.'

From the Ranks to the Peerage. By H. A. BRUCE.
Crown 8vo, cloth 6s.

Liverpool Mercury.—'Our interest never flags for a moment, and from start to finish the author carries us with him, not alone by the clear story which he unfolds, but by some remarkably striking and successful characterisation. The story is so good that we can safely leave it in the hands of the reader. We commend it as one to be read and enjoyed.

IN ONE VOLUME, Price 3s. 6d.

Under the Rowan Tree, and Other Stories. By ALAN ST AUBYN. Author of 'A Fellow of Trinity,' 'The Junior Dean,' 'Fortune's Gate,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Third Edition.*

Gentlewoman.—'The subject-matter of these charming stories is intensely interesting and full of rare pathos, interwoven with bits of drama, that make one feel how real and true to life they are.'

The Tragedy of a Nose. By E. GERARD (EMILY DE LASZOWSKA). Author of 'A Foreigner,' 'A Secret Mission,' &c. Cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Morning Post.—'Miss E. Gerard's amusing tale is quite as clever in its way as anything she has written.'

Claude Duval of Ninety-Five. By FERGUS HUME. Author of 'The Masquerade Mystery,' 'A Marriage Mystery,' &c. Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Fourth Edition.*

Manchester Courier.—'This is one of the best stories that Mr Hume has given us since "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab."'

The Tuttlebury Troubles. By W. CARTER PLATTS. Author of 'The Tuttlebury Tales,' &c. Pictorial cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Bookman.—'A very lively volume. Mr Tuttlebury's domestic expressions are wonderfully amusing.'

Sir Gaspard's Affinity. By MINA SANDEMAN. Author of 'The Worship of Lucifer,' &c. Cloth, 3s. 6d.

Literature.—'Is a very charming story. Miss Sandeman's breezy story is sure to be welcomed.'

'Twixt Cup and Lip, and Other Stories. By Mrs E. LYNN LINTON. Author of 'Patricia Kemball,' &c. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.—*Third Edition.*

Daily News.—'A collection of tales . . . all excellently written.'

The Desire of the Eyes, and Other Stories. By GRANT ALLEN. Author of 'The Woman Who Did,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Seventh Edition.*

Western Mail.—'The narrations are told in the well-known and sprightly style of the author.'

Norma. A School Tale. By EMILY M. BRYANT. Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 3s. 6d. With Illustrations.

Guardian.—'Miss Bryant has written a clever story where the unfailing good temper and clever invention of a governess subdues a very haughty damsel.'

Our Paying Guests, and Other Stories. By Mrs CHARLES E. TERROT. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

St Paul's.—'One of the most fascinating collections of short tales we have read for some time.'

The Deil's Grannie. By J. PARRINGTON-POOLE.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Bradford Observer.—'The author has woven thrilling incidents of old smuggling days into the story, given us delicious snatches of fisher folk life, thrown around his narrative the glamour of true poetic appreciation of natural scenery, and made the whole throb with human passion. It is a book of living interest.'

Shuffles: A Tale of Four. By GILBERT WATSON.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Daily Telegraph.—'Mr Gilbert Watson may be cordially congratulated upon having written a genuinely funny book, every page of which sparkles with kindly humour, and is provocative of healthy laughter. Everyone should read the adventures of "Shuffles."'

Across the Zodiac. A Story of Adventure. By GILBERT WATSON. In pictorial cloth, with a Frontispiece. Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. —*Second Edition.*

The Morning Post.—'One of the best books of the year.'

The Rose of Allandale. By Dr GORDON STABLES, M.D., R.N. Author of 'The Mystery of a Millionaire's Grave,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Aberdeen Press.—'Breezy in style and highly sensational in matter, the interest is sustained from beginning to end without a break.'

Zobeir; or, Turkish Misrule. By WILLIAM ST CLAIR.
Author of 'Baja the Freebooter.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Scotsman.—'Mr St Clair has imparted to "Zobeir" a genuine flavour of Orientalism. The story hangs well together, and is told in simple and yet flowing language. It is a good story.'

Across Country. A Sporting Romance. By JOHN GILBERT.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Academy.—'The book is written with a sprightly pen.'

Leeds Mercury.—'The author writes in a pleasant, breezy, characteristic manner, describing his scenes with a certain amount of spirit.'

The Mystery of Bloomsbury Crescent. By MRS LODGE.
Author of 'A Son of the Gods,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Yorkshire Post.—'Is as entertaining as the majority of stories dealing with hypnotism and the like.

How I Dished the Don, and Other Stories. By JO VANNY.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Literature.—'The stories are told with brisk directness, and there is scarcely a petticoat in the volume, an achievement indeed.'

A Girl from the States. By Dr Gordon Stables, M.D., R.N. Author of 'The Mystery of a Millionaire's Grave,' &c. Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 3s. 6d.

Scotsman.—'A cleverly written love story, with a sentimental plot, and characters drawn from modern life. It is a more substantial affair than the tales of adventure and travel for boys, with which this writer's name is more intimately associated, and while it should not fail to please young readers it may attract grown-up people as well.'

Phil Flippin's Rise. By Frank Yerlock. Author of 'The Secret of the Yew,' &c. Cloth, 3s. 6d.

Glasgow Daily Mail.—'The story is told with considerable force and graphic power, and holds the reader's attention from beginning to end.'

John Bede's Wife. By Cecil Wentworth. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Athenæum.—'This simple and unpretentious story contains the material for a good novel; and the manner in which several of the more pathetic personages are handled show that the writer possesses some share of literary instinct.'

The Romance of Nun's Hollow. By Rietta. By the Author of 'A Rogue's Punishment.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Aberdeen Press.—'Is a breezy, wholesome story, which, once taken up, will not be laid down till it is finished.'

The Archdeacon's Daughters, and Other Stories. By G. A. Musgrave. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Punch.—'The book is well worth reading.'

Trespassers Who were Prosecuted. By Sadi Grant. Author of 'A New Woman Subdued.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Literary World.—'Two capital stories written in a bright, attractive style, which is very enjoyable.'

Lloyds.—'Miss Grant writes a vivid pen, and there are few readers who will not appreciate this distinctly clever volume.'

The 'Lettre De Cachet,' and Other Stories. By C. H. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Aberdeen Journal.—'The "Lettre de Cachet" is a very pleasant story, well conceived and worked out with considerable skill.

Lloyds.—'A dainty imagination wedded to a facile pen marks the work of the writer of this book.'

IN ONE VOLUME, Price 2s. 6d.

The Tuttlebury Tales. By W. CARTER PLATTS.
Author of 'A Few Smiles,' &c. Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 2s. 6d.—*New and Sixth Edition.*
Spectator. — 'Mr Platts reminds us of the American humourist, Max Adeler. He is not an imitator, but his fun is of the same kind, farcical of course, but unstrained and laughter compelling.'

Inmates of the Mansion. By JOSEPH ASHTON.
Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 2s. 6d. Beautifully illustrated.
Daily Telegraph.—'An allegorical subject, and will be found most readable for youths, who will learn a lesson in glancing through its pages.'

The Inseparables. A Book for Boys. By CHIETON CHALMERS.
Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, fully illustrated, 2s. 6d.
Pall Mall Gazette.—'High above the average of school stories. It is really a first-rate story.'

A Mere Pug. The Romance of a Dog. By NEMO.
Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 2s. 6d. *A New Edition.* Illustrated by A. BAUERLE.
Standard.—'This pretty story of the adventures of a pug dog . . . there are few books of the season that could have been more heartily recommended for children.'

Chiefly Concerning Two. BY ALAN SCOTT.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.
Western Daily Mercury—'This book is very finely written.'

A Twofold Sin. By M. BRAZIER.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.
Dundee Courier.—'The story is well written.'

Sorely Tried. By COSMO CLARK.
Author of 'A Portrait of a Woman,' &c. Cloth, 2s. 6d.
Aberdeen Free Press—'An enterprising story of domestic life, the scene of which is placed in Boulogne-sur-Mer.'

Tales of the Strong Room. By F. DENISON.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.
Western Mercury.—'The tales are all well told.'
People.—'The tales are brightly written.'
Lady.—'Most exciting and smartly written short stories.'
North British Mail.—'A quaint and amusing story.'

Adventures of the Remarkable Twain. By HUBERT CLOUDESLEY. Author of 'Passing Thoughts,' 'The Sweetest Maid in Glowton,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.
Public Opinion.—'Hubert Cloudesley narrates the doings of a remarkable youngster, one John Isaac, who is up to all the tricks of "Helen's Babies." The book is smartly written.'

The History of Captain Katt. BY MRS MARY HUGHES.
Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 2s. 6d.
World.—'Is one of the very best books for children we have read.'

IN ONE VOLUME, Price, 1s. 6d. and 1s.

Phillipa's Adventures in Upsidedownland.
By LAURA LUCIA FINLAY. Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 1s. 6d.

Furrows. By COSMO HAMILTON.
Author of 'Which is Absurd,' &c. Long 12mo, pictorial cloth, 1s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Where Billows Break. By HILLARY DECCAN.
Author of 'Light in the Offing.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.

The Vagaries of Love. By F. H. HUDSON.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.

Unsolved Mysteries. By VIOLET TWEEDALE.
Author of 'And They Two,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

The Haunted Looking Glass. By GRATIANA DARRELL.
Crown 8vo, pictorial cloth, 1s. 6d.—*With a Frontispiece.*

Small Concerns. By FRANCES ENGLAND.
Long 12mo, 1s.

The Master of Hullingham Manor. By BERNARD WENTWORTH. Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

Sweet Scented Grass. By NEVILLE MARION.
Long 12mo, paper cover, 1s.

Sporting Adventures of Monsieur Lolotte. By BLAKE LAMOND. By the Author of 'The Two Dunmores,' &c. Paper cover, 1s.

Shibboleth. By KATHERINE RENELL.
Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

Penarth. By D. C. PARKINSON.
Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

In a Web of Gold. By RITA RUSSELL.
Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

The Diamond Bangle. By LILLIE CRANE.
Author of 'My Lady Dimple.' Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

Portugese Rita. By M. P. GUIMARAENS.
Long 12mo, paper cover, 1s.

Memoirs of a Young Surgeon. By FREDERICK ASHURST, M.B.
Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.

The Foray of Hendrick Hudson. By FRANK SAVILLE.
Author of 'John Ship, Mariner,' 'Beyond the Great South Wall,' &c. Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s.

Roof Roofer's Sensational Shilling Novels

LOVE ONLY LENT.
THE TWIN DIANAS.
TWO MOTHERS OF ONE.
PRETTYBAD ROGERS.

Daily Chronicle.—'Mr Roofer is undoubtedly clever, his smart and witty style.'

Miscellaneous

The Birds of Our Country. By H. E. STEWART, B.A. With Illustrations by ARCHIBALD THORBURN, J. GIACOMELLI, G. E. LODGE, K. KEYL, R. KRETSCHMER, &c. Crown 8vo. Pictorial cloth, gilt top, 3s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Illustrated Prospectus with Press Opinions post free.

The Hereford Times.—'This capital work furnishes the young collector with a book which is not beyond his means, and which at the same time contains an account of all the birds which he is likely to meet with in the British Isles.'

Wit, Wisdom and Folly. Pen and Pencil Flashes. By J. VILLIN MARMERY. Author of 'Progress of Science,' &c. With 100 Original Illustrations by ALFRED TOUCHEMOLIN, Author of 'Strasbourg Militaire.' Demy 8vo, superior binding, 6s. An *Edition de Luxe*, in Royal 8vo, printed on hand-made paper, and limited to 100 copies, bound in red leather, gilt top, is also issued, price 21s. net.

Standard (Leader).—'A pleasant volume of chatty anecdotes. Bright and piquant. Mr Marmery's book ought to be a treasure to the confirmed diner-out.'

Portentous Prophets and Prophetesses. By ALEXANDER M'MILLAN, M.A. Author of 'Diver Ditties,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.

St Paul's.—'The book is well and clearly written.'

The Latest Fruit is the Ripest. By F. I. GANT, F.R.C.S. Author of 'Perfect Womanhood,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.—*Second Edition.*

Manchester Courier.—'The volume is worthy of careful study. It sets forth a number of religious considerations as to the development of the strength and character of women in fields of spiritual endeavour.'

Two French Queens. By CAROLINE GEAREY. 'Elizabeth of Valois—Marguerite of Valois.' By the Author of 'In Other Lands,' 'Three Empresses,' 'Royal Friendships.' With Portraits, crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.—*Second Edition.*

Birmingham Gazette.—'Miss Gearey has once more given us a charming collection of historical biographies, compiled with care and written with taste and true womanly feeling.'

Stories from Wagner. By VIRGINIA TAYLOUR. With Preface by HERR C. F. GLASENAPP. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Globe.—'It opens with a memoir of the great music dramatist. The only volume in which the plots of all Wagner's stage productions are set forth clearly and simply.'

Idylls. By M. MAUD HELLYER.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.

Bookman.—'A collection of graceful little allegories.'

Royal Friendships. By CAROLINE GEAREY.
By the Author of 'Two French Queens,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Weekly Sun—'Miss Gearey's book deserves to be regarded, not only as a piece of entertaining writing, but also as a valuable addition to the history and manners of both periods.'

Queen.—'This book would be a charming present for any girl.'

Longer Flights. — Recollections and Studies. By Mrs A. IRELAND. By the Author of 'Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Scotsman.—'A book which will be read with interest.'

Nigh on Sixty Years at Sea. By ROBERT WOOLWARD ('OLD WOOLWARD.') Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s. With Portrait.—*Second Edition.*

Times.—'Very entertaining reading. Captain Woolward writes sensibly and straightforwardly, and tells his story with the frankness of an old salt. He has a keen sense of humour, and his stories are endless and very entertaining.'

The Secrets of the Hand. By MAUD HARRIES. Cloth, 2s. 6d.

Observer.—'Those wishing to learn the art and mystery of fortune-telling by the hand will find much information in this volume.'

Hereford Times.—'This excellent little book should enjoy a wide circulation.'

The Italians of To-day. By JOSIAH CROOKLANDS.
Translated from the French of RENÉ BAZIN. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Athenæum.—'Mr René Bazin is a writer whose style we have often praised.'

Glimpses of Life in Bermuda and the Tropics.
By MARGARET NEWTON. With 42 Illustrations by the Author. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s.

Bradford Observer.—'Pleasantly written and copiously illustrated; this record of a visit to the West Indies should bring the many charms of these delightful Islands vividly before English Readers.'

The Author's Manual. By PERCY RUSSELL.
With Prefatory Remarks by Mr GLADSTONE. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net. (*Ninth and Cheaper Edition*). With Portrait.

Westminster Review.—'Mr Russell's book is a very complete manual and guide for journalist and author. It is not a merely practical work—it is literary and appreciative of literature in its best sense; . . . we have little else but praise for the volume.'

Thoughts on the Apostles. By F. G. WHITE.
Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.—*Just out.*

A Guide to British and American Novels. From the Earliest Period to the end of 1894. By PERCY RUSSELL. By the Author of 'The Author's Manual,' &c. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.—*Second Edition carefully revised.*

Spectator.—'Mr Russell's familiarity with every form of novel is amazing, and his summaries of plots and comments thereon are as brief and lucid as they are various.'

Consumption—How to Avoid It, and Weak Eyes. Two Lectures. By B. SCHWARZBACH, M.D. (Wurzburg); L.F.P.S. (Glasgow.) Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d.

Dundee Courier.—'A store of common sense and scientific knowledge . . . of real service to many.'

The Nineteenth Century in France; or Selections from the best Modern French Literary Works, with English Translations. By PAUL CHAUVET, B.A., of the Paris University. In 2 Vols. Vol. I. The Poets:—Lamartine, Hugo, Musset. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d.

Echo.—'A book that will be found useful for schools and students.'

Poetry and the Drama

By KATHLEEN BEHENNA

The History of a Soul. Beautifully printed on Hand-made Paper. Demy 8vo, artistic cloth, gilt edges, 5s. net.

By FREDERICK J. JOHNSTON-SMITH

The Captain of the Dolphin, and other Poems of the Sea. Crown 8vo, art linen, gilt top, 3s. 6d. net.

By CECILLA ELIZABETH MEETKERKE

Fragments from Victor Hugo's Legends and Lyrics. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. 6d.

By C. POTTER

Cantos from the Divina Commedia of Dante. Translated into English Verse. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6s. net. Second and Enlarged Edition.

By LILY OVERINGTON

Random Rhymes and Christmas Chimes. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By HENRY OSBORNE, M.A.

The Palace of Delights, and other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By the late ERNEST G. HENTY and E. A. STARKEY

Australian Idylls and Bush Rhymes. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By LEONARD WILLIAMS

Ballads and Songs of Spain. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By WALTER THEAD

The Story of Jephthah, and other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

By E. DERRY

Sophonisba; or, The Prisoner of Alba, and other Poems. By the Author of 'Lays of the Scottish Highlands.' Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By ALEXANDER BUCKLER

Word Sketches in Windsor. Foolscap 8vo, art linen, 2s. 6d.

By ISAAC WILLCOCKS, M.R.S.

The Magic Key. A Fairy Drama in Four Acts. By the Author of "Pixy." Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d.

By an ODDFELLOW

Odds and Ends. Foolscap 8vo, art linen, 1s. 6d. net.

By E. M. BERESFORD

Songs and Shadows. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By EVAN T. KEANE

A Moorland Brook, and Other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By J. R. SIMMS

Notes on the Way, in Verse. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By A. J. JOYCE

A Roman Anti-Christ. A Narrative in Rhyme. Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. net.

By AUGUSTUS RALLI

The Enchanted River, and Other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By DUDLEY CHARLES BUSHBY

The Royal Shepherdess, and Other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

By ELLEN H. EBBS

The Inner Light, and Other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

By MARIA GREER

A Vision's Voice, and Other Poems. Foolscap 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

By SWITHIN SAINT SWITHAINE

A Divan of the Dales, and Other Poems. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By GEORGE ASHMORE ROBERTS

Pencil Rhymes and Poetry. Crown 8vo, paper cover, 1s. 6d.

By FREDERIC W. COULTER

England's Glory. Foolscap 8vo, art linen, gilt top, 1s. 6d. net.

By CHARLES RATHBONE LOW

The Epic of Olympus. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By STAUNTON BRODIE

Poetical Stories. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By TEMPLE NEWELL

Episodes of Joy. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By JOHN G. DUNCAN

Tramps and Troubadours. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By REGINALD B. SPAN

Poems of Two Worlds. Crown 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

By HENRY AVELING

Poems and Paragraphs. Crown 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

By CLIFFORD KING

Poems. Crown, 8vo, cloth, 5s. net.

DIGBY'S POPULAR NOVEL SERIES.

Bound in uniform handsome cloth, gilt lettered.
Crown 8vo, price 2s. 6d. per volume.

These novels have met with marked success in the more expensive form.

A Man's Privilege. By DORA RUSSELL.
The Other Bond. By DORA RUSSELL.
A Hidden Chain. By DORA RUSSELL.
The Masquerade Mystery. By FERGUS HUME.
A Marriage Mystery. By FERGUS HUME.
The Honourable Mrs Spoor. By ARABELLA KENEALY.
Dr Janet of Harley Street. By ARABELLA KENEALY.
Some Men are Such Gentlemen. By ARABELLA KENEALY.
Stripped of the Tinsel. By J. E. MUDDOCK.
Without Faith or Fear. By J. E. MUDDOCK.
A Lover of the Day. By ANNIE THOMAS.
False Pretences. By ANNIE THOMAS.
Juanita Carrington. By Mrs ROBERT JOCELYN.
Hush Money. By JEAN MIDDLEMASS.
The Mystery of Clement Dunraven. By JEAN MIDDLEMASS.
The Beautiful Soul. By FLORENCE MARRYAT.
In the Name of Liberty. By FLORENCE MARRYAT.
A Life for a Love. By L. T. MEADE.
The Jolly Roger. By HUME NISBET.
Her Loving Slave. By HUME NISBET.
His Egyptian Wife. By HILTON HILL.
The American Cousins. By SARAH TYTLER.
A Woman's Cross. By Mrs A. M. DIEHL.
The Laird's Deed of Settlement. By JAMES M. KIPPEN.

Other Works in the same Series in due course.

DIGBY, LONG & Co., Publishers, London.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 107834696